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ABSTRACT

In England over the last 20 years there has been a major revolution in the teaching of primary school children. This revolution has come about through the efforts of wise, enthusiastic, and experimenting teachers rather than through the idealized practices and techniques of professors, inspectors, or administrators. This document gives an account of the primary schools as they were and as they are now; describes how and why the change has taken place; and compares the present strengths, weaknesses, and dangers with those of the past. (Author/MLF)

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REVOLUTION IN THE BRITISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

SIR ALEC CLEGG

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FOREWORD

Charles E. Silberman

We were still very American, my wife and I, when we first met Sir Alec Clegg. Early in the conversation, therefore, we asked that inevitable American question: "Do you have any statistics?"—statistics that might permit us to compare the achievement of students in informal and formal schools. Sir Alec hoisted an enormous leather portfolio onto his conference table and opened it. "Here are the statistics," he said, as he began to show the contents: extraordinary samples of paintings, drawings, collages, embroideries, stories, poems, and essays produced by students in his district. Lest we be misled, he added a cautionary note: "All these things are the by-products; the children are the products!"

The "by-products" were overwhelming in their beauty, power, and sensitivity; four years later, they stay in our minds. Sir Alec acknowledged their quality but refused our compliment. "This kind of work makes one realize that we are touching only a fraction of what children are capable of," he insisted—particularly the so-called slower learners. "I am absolutely convinced that we do not know the limit of our slower learners," he added, banging his chair for emphasis.

Sir Alec still eschews statistics. "It is a matter of intense interest to me," he writes in these pages, "to watch, over a 20-year span, the development of the fundamentals of education as seen, not in intelligence tests or reading techniques or history syllabuses, but in the way children dance and paint and write and behave toward one another." If American principals and superintendents—and school board members and parents—evaluated their work in this way, we would not be reeling from crisis to crisis.

Small wonder that Sir Alec Clegg is widely acknowledged as one of the giants of British education, or that he has been one of the leaders of the quiet revolution that has transformed British primary education since World War II. Everyone who is remotely interested in improving American education is indebted to the National Association of Elementary School Principals for persuading him to write this booklet describing how the revolution occurred and suggesting how American teachers and principals might be helped to change.

Revolution in the British Primary Schools bears reading and rereading, so crammed is it with insights and suggestions, sometimes

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Charles E. Silberman is the author of *Crisis in the Classroom* (1970) and *Crisis in Black and White* (1964), published by Random House.

presented directly, sometimes almost in passing. Sir Alec's approach is so self-effacing and his style so understated, moreover, that it takes several readings to begin to catch nuances of what he is saying. His opening paragraph, for example, says a great deal about administrative style, and about the way in which change occurs. "As Education Officer [Superintendent of Schools] of an Authority that maintains about a thousand primary schools [nearly 200,000 students] staffed by some 7,000 teachers, it has been an inspiration to me to observe this revolution closely, and, indeed, to contribute to it in some small way by smoothing the path of those who have led it."

Those who have led the revolution, he insists, are the ones American reformers traditionally and characteristically have tended to ignore—the classroom teachers. "The kind of change that has taken place has not been brought about by professors or inspectors or administrators thinking great thoughts and imposing their idealized practices and techniques from above. It has come about because wise, enthusiastic, and experimenting teachers have inspired and convinced those of their fellows who are constantly looking for better ways."

Sir Alec's diffidence should not be confused with lack of leadership. Quite the contrary; *Revolution in the British Primary Schools* is (among other things) a clear and persuasive account of how schools can be transformed through leadership—non-authoritarian leadership. Posing the question, "How is this best done?" Sir Alec answers it by describing how he himself did it.

Sir Alec's starting point was to find teachers and principals—for example, Arthur Stone, Diana Jordan, Basil Rocke, and Ruth Scrivener—who exemplified successful practice and to put them to work teaching teachers. One of their functions was to run residential workshops in which they taught teachers as they would have the teachers teach *their* children. Seeing the impact these early workshops had, Sir Alec persuaded his Authority to purchase an old mansion, Woolley Hall, to serve as a year-round Teacher Center. "It is important that such a center, which can be—and in the case of Woolley Hall was and is—the powerhouse of the area, should receive the direct concern and attention of the head of the service." Hence Sir Alec joins the staff when they discuss the program for the year, asking a few deceptively simple questions that go to the heart of the educational process. "What does the course aim at

achieving? How do you propose to achieve it? What staff do you propose to employ? What tasks will they undertake?"

Even the best courses are insufficient by themselves, however. If it is to have any lasting impact, a course must be followed up in the classroom, for a teacher, no matter how much he has learned from his workshop, "may be hesitant about taking the first step in his own school. He needs encouragement, and this comes best from visiting advisors who know about the course and the kind of inspiration, understanding, and advice that it proclaimed." Such advisors, or "encouragers" as Sir Alec likes to call them, must themselves be accomplished practitioners. They must also be "sensitive, patient, undoctrinaire, and unauthoritarian people who will avoid all temptation to impose rapid change on schools; rather, they will look for growing points in each school and move on from there." And "they must be persons whom teachers will enjoy having in their schools."

In the last analysis, leadership of the Clegg variety is an attempt to help everyone concerned with children's education—teachers, principals, administrators, and advisors—to get first things first, which is to say, to think about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what the consequences are. For example:

"If we become obsessed with the acquisition of skills, we tend to lose sight of the purposes for which they were meant to be used. It is important, for instance, that a child should learn to read, but it is also very important that he should want to read what is worth reading"—a fact we Americans all too often tend to forget.

"Teachers are saying that learning to write is important—but to write *what?* To record what one has seen or heard is important, but to be able to express one's ideas personally, cogently, and, on occasion, imaginatively, is equally important.

But most important of all is what happens to the child. "What really matters," Sir Alec writes, "is not the quality of the picture that the child has drawn or the excellence of the writing he has produced but what has happened to the child during the process." This view of education is not original, of course, with Sir Alec; some 2,400 years ago, Socrates talked about education in similar, almost identical terms. We in this country desperately need men like Sir Alec to remind us, through their writings, and, even more, their practice, that education "is not about something casual, but about the proper way to live."

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REVOLUTION IN THE BRITISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In England over the last 20 years, there has been a major revolution in the teaching of primary school children between 8 and 12 years of age. As Education Officer of an Authority that maintains about a thousand primary schools staffed by some 7,000 teachers, it has been an inspiration to me to observe this revolution closely, and, indeed, to contribute to it in some small way by smoothing the path of those who have led it.

The intention of this publication is to give an account of what we have changed from and what we have changed to, to describe how and why the change has taken place, and what are the strengths, weaknesses, and dangers of what we now do by comparison with what we used to do. It is not my intent, nor is it within my province, to produce a "how to do it" manual for bringing about change in the schools. The kind of change that has taken place has not been brought about by professors or inspectors or administrators thinking great thoughts and imposing their idealized practices and techniques from above. It has come about because wise, enthusiastic, and experimenting teachers have inspired and convinced those of their fellows who are constantly looking for better ways.

WHAT HAVE WE CHANGED FROM?

Before describing what we have changed from, it might be well to point out that before 1870 no system of education existed in England that was publicly financed and publicly controlled. We are not proud of this, but it is nevertheless a fact of history. Indeed as recently as 1970, my wife had a great-aunt still living who was born before our public system of elementary education began. She was 9 years of age before attendance at school was made compulsory. She was 24 years of age before it was made free, and not until she was 35 was it legal to spend public money on secondary education in England. It is true that she was born in 1867 but nevertheless the whole system of public education in England as we now have it developed during her lifetime.

The elementary education system in England was established, avowedly, to provide schools in which the children of the laboring poor, as they were called, might learn to read their Bibles. But there was no intention that these children would thereby be encouraged to rise above the station in life in which it pleased Almighty God to place them at birth.

The work that the children had to do in those early days was set out in a code of regulations issued by the central government. It was prescribed minutely in standards or grades, and no child was moved to a higher grade until he satisfied the itinerant school inspector that he could master the work of the grade in which he was placed at the time. Teachers were even paid—and this is a terrible confession—according to the number of pupils they managed to pass through each grade. If many passed, the school earned more money; if few, it earned less.

The system was rigid, harsh, and narrow. The educational principles on which it was founded were as unsound as its views on childhood were false. The discipline of these early days had its origins in a puritanical belief in the Old Testament of our religion: Man was "conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and the imagination of his heart was evil from his youth." Left to his own devices, the Original Sin of which he was possessed would certainly prevail. Fortunately, however, the God of Wrath stood before him, offering a reward of heavenly bliss if he was good and punishment by hellfire if he was bad. The Will of God was set forth in commandments, creeds, and catechisms, and "to obey was better than sacrifice." This relationship between man and his God was passed down the educational line. The teacher stood before the pupil, offering merit marks and stars in

lace of heavenly bliss, and the threat of the od replaced the threat of hellfire. What he pupil learned, he learned by rote. What e learned, he repeated to his teacher, as he teacher repeated the church catechism o his priest. In both cases, the shadow as mistaken for the substance.

What did the early schools look like—the chools that produced the adults of today? Their buildings consisted of classrooms, ach some 400 to 500 square feet, sometimes onnected by a corridor, sometimes not. They were serviced by a principal's room, hall, a small staff room, and the usual anitary offices outside across the yard. Each lassroom had high windows, dull walls, a ominant teacher's desk, and a cane. The lassroom walls were covered with maps, harts, diagrams, arithmetical tables, lists f words, some of the children's best paintngs, and "improving" pictures in sepia.

In each classroom, there were 40 to 50 hildren, seated in the early days at long ench desks, and later on at single or double esks. The desks were arranged to face the eacher's desk and the chalkboard so that all ould attend to the same lesson, at the ame time, under the same eye of authority.

School began at nine o'clock, and at five inutes to nine, a whistle froze the children nto immobility. At the second blast, they ined up in rows to enter school. Once inide, registers were called, and the pupils were marshaled into the halls for "the assembly," which consisted of prayers—generally in an archaic language—a hymn, a Bible reading, notices, and any general remonstrances. Once the pupils were back in their classrooms, the day's lessons began with Scripture, the only subject that, by law, must still be taught in all English schools.

The primary school curriculum in those days consisted of the three R's, physical training, history, geography, nature study, Scripture, and art and craft. It was very difficult to add to or subtract from this curriculum.

The school day was divided into seven lesson periods; the program was divided into subjects; and the class teachers were required to prepare and submit specific schemes of work to the head teacher who, in turn and on demand, would submit them to the visiting inspector. These schemes of work had their origins in standards or grades—a practice of organizing work that was almost certainly taken from the United States. Beginning in the second half of the last century and continuing almost to the end of it, public education in the schools of the nation had to follow a code, drawn up nationally, that prescribed what children had to do during each year in the elementary school. For example, they had to learn to read according to the following prescription:

Standard or Grade I: Read a short paragraph from a book that is not confined to words of one syllable.

Standard or Grade II: Read with intelligence a short paragraph from an elementary reading book.

Standard or Grade III: Read with intelligence a short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.

Arithmetic was similarly graded:

Standard or Grade I: Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures and the multiplication table up to six times twelve.

Standard or Grade II: Subtraction, multiplication, and short division.

Standard or Grade III: Long division and compound rules of money.

And so the work continued its systematic course up to Standard VI when children were expected to read "with fluency and expression"; when their arithmetic consisted of proportion, vulgar and decimal fractions; their grammar, the parsing and the analysis of a "complex" sentence; their geography, the outlines of the geography of the world; and their history, the outlines of the history of England from Henry VII to the death of George III.

These were the standards, and the schools received government funds according to the number of pupils deemed to have "passed" the test set to them by the itinerant inspector. This was payment for results. The fact that payment was made according to examined results had the baneful effect that children who were unlikely to pass and subjects that were not examined were both neglected. This system of payment ceased

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By the 1930's, the *infant* schools—schools for children 5 to 7 years of age—had already embarked on the course that has been followed ever since. Teachers in training for these schools learned the value of clay, sand, water, and all manner of sense-

training apparatus. The physical education of infants already included dramatic games, even though they erred on the side of sentiment. Music teaching had enlisted the support of percussion instruments. And whatever the training of infant teachers in those days did *not* do, it most certainly insisted on the importance of learning how to manage the many and varied teaching materials already available at that time. Moreover, in some of the best colleges, teachers in training were encouraged to study both the environment of the school in which they practiced and the environment of individual pupils within the school.

But these improvements in the infant schools were not immediately accompanied by improvements in the primary schools. The schemes of work in use in the primary or junior schools of the late 1930's still showed little evidence of the transformation that was to begin some ten years later. The following are brief, isolated extracts from a headmaster's schemes of work in use in the early 1940's.

English:

Simple conversations without the use of inverted commas.

There should be regular revision of the words explained and the opportunities for use. Take for instance the word *cut*. Ask the children to explain what it means. Find alternatives: *hew, sever, fell.* Take oral sentences and build on the words.

Make a simple spelling book in the handbook lesson. Take five words a day and revise thoroughly.

Speech Training:

Organs used in speech.
How to breathe.
How to make different sounds.
Blowing a bubble.
Smelling a flower.
Blowing away a dandelion seed.

Arithmetic:

Easy factors and factorization within the range of the tables.

The four simple rules applied to numbers under 1,000.

Learning the terms *sum, quotient, product,* and *difference.*

History:

The people of long ago who lived in caves, and the animals of those days.

Theseus and the monster. Caedmon and the cowherd of Whitby.

Nature Study Class I:

Show how all the relationships between members of nature's great family may be grouped around a certain central fact.

First Year: The sun as giver of life.

Second Year: The interdependence of animal and plant life.

Third Year: The so

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Art and Craft:

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The four simple rules applied to numbers under 1,000.

Learning the terms *sum, quotient, product,* and *difference.*

History:

The people of long ago who lived in caves, and the animals of those days.

Theseus and the monster. Caedmon and the cowherd of Whitby.

Nature Study Class I:

Show how all the relationships between members of nature's great family may be grouped around a certain central fact.

First Year: The sun as giver of life.

Second Year: The interdependence of animal and plant life.

Third Year: The social life of nature.

Fourth Year: The histories of plants and animals.

Art and Craft:

The relationship between primary and secondary colors. (Provide each classroom with a simple color wheel.)

Complementary colors.

Simple exercises in the laying on of color.

Design in circle and lozenge.

Paper and card wash, leading to bookbinding.

Jotters, notebooks, mounting Christmas cards, blotters, bookmarkers, purses, table mats, comb cases, friezes, and repeat patterns.

In the schools using syllabuses of the kind represented by these extracts, the day's work was divided into periods of minutes. Scripture, for instance, was taken from 9:00 until 9:28 a.m., and the school register was closed between 9:28 and 9:30 a.m. Poetry was taken for 17 minutes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and the poems to be learned by heart were selected by the head of the school. Arithmetic was taken from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. every day, and there was a sanctity about it which did not apply to other subjects. Children were seldom allowed to move about the school during this period. Multiplication tables were chanted; children counted in twos, threes, fours, fives,

and so on. Sums dealt with gills, hundredweights, furlongs, and leap years. Dividing a third by a half, and similar tricks, had to be mastered.

History generally meant the study of a period, say 55 B.C. to 1066 A.D., and there were generally two lessons each week. The first lesson might consist of a talk by the teacher on the Romans. For the second lesson, the class might color and label a hectographed outline of a Roman villa.

Geography—and even nature study—was more often than not "learned" from a book.

English consisted of comprehension exercises and dictations, unpunctuated sentences that had to be punctuated, words that had to be rearranged, blanks that had to be filled in, and spelling lists that had to be learned. For English composition, a topic was assigned. Suitable words, selected by the teacher and written on the chalkboard, had to be woven into the composition.

Handwriting was practiced daily and consisted of writing, many times and with great care, a chosen motto such as, "Too many cooks spoil the broth."

Craft was an area in which some rather terrible things were perpetrated. Whole classes at a time made comb cases or hot water bottle covers or peg bags for mother —all done from blackboard diagrams so that the children were relieved of thought and denied initiative. Craft also included

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a great deal of bookbinding because it taught children to measure.

Drama was a set play, with no room for creativity. In 1946, Form 3B of the school, from whose schemes of work the earlier quotations were extracted, performed a sketch called *Peter Patch* in which the dramatis personae consisted of Peter Patch, Paul, Martha, Carol Singers, and the Elves —Flit, Flash, Thistle, Glow, Tinkle, and Flutter. Form 4A presented a play in which some of the main characters were Raisins, Currants, Flowers, a Plum Pudding, and a Fairy Doll. A considerable number of the children were Crackers, a part that today might not be acceptable to children of their age. What was done was what sentimental adults thought nice little boys and girls ought to want to do.

Good work was rewarded by a star, poor work was often punished by the cane, and fear played a significant part in the school life. At worst, fear was passed down the line: The headmaster feared His Majesty's inspector, the assistant teacher feared the headmaster, the children feared the assistant *and* the headmaster *and* the inspector.

The headmaster's schemes of work were so devised that the assistant teacher knew in September what he would be teaching the following July. Since the headmaster himself was responsible for all schemes, since inservice training was virtually un-

known, and since His Majesty's inspector visited the school only once in five years, the likelihood was that what was being taught in 1939 by the assistant was what the headmaster had thought was right when *he* began teaching in the early 1920's.

The only force that changed the syllabus drastically and immediately was the external examination set at the age of 11 plus, with the aim of selecting children for grammar schools. In the early 1950's, the old type of examination, with its composition, its mechanical arithmetic, and its problems, gave way to "standardized" tests in English, arithmetic, and "intelligence." When this happened, the type of arithmetic changed rapidly—and for the worse—with the result that by 1955 a system of selection that did not depend on tests had to be introduced.

Perhaps the most severe criticism that could be leveled at the teaching methods of the 1930's was that much that was taught was taught as a series of tricks. Certainly this could be said of mathematics. I, the writer of this comment, received 10 percent in arithmetic on my first attempt at the School Certificate examination when I was 15 years old. I raised this to 90 percent a year later. Nevertheless, I remained impressively innumerate. Not until after I reached retiring age did I realize that when you *divide* a fraction by a smaller fraction you find out how many small parts of a thing there are in a larger part of the same thing; that when you *multiply* these fractions you split a part of a thing into smaller parts still. But my confidence was so badly damaged in my early years at school that even now I am by no means certain that the foregoing statements are correct!

It is easy now to be derisive about the educational practices of an earlier day. And, in fact, there are many reasons to be critical of primary school education in the 1930's: It left so little to the initiative of the child; it put the cart of drill and exercise before the horse of interest; it was based on an unreasonable belief in the worth of a specific body of knowledge; it had so very little faith in the child's creative powers; and it dealt with the class rather than with the individual.

But, having made these criticisms of primary school education in the 1930's, we should not overlook the merits that it had. Those who do the most harm to the reform of teaching are often those who categorically affirm that what we did in the past was inhumane and ineffective and who refuse to see or to admit that anything of worth was achieved. Many of those who taught were good and kindly people who succeeded because of their kindliness. Their pedagogic and often their religious beliefs gave them a security that was passed on to the children. The teaching was positive. The pupils knew where
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It is easy now to be derisive about the educational practices of an earlier day. And, in fact, there are many reasons to be critical of primary school education in the 1930's: It left so little to the initiative of the child; it put the cart of drill and exercise before the horse of interest; it was based on an unreasonable belief in the worth of a specific body of knowledge; it had so very little faith in the child's creative powers; and it dealt with the class rather than with the individual.

But, having made these criticisms of primary school education in the 1930's, we should not overlook the merits that it had. Those who do the most harm to the reform of teaching are often those who categorically affirm that what we did in the past was inhumane and ineffective and who refuse to see or to admit that anything of worth was achieved. Many of those who taught were good and kindly people who succeeded because of their kindliness. Their pedagogic and often their religious beliefs gave them a security that was passed on to the children. The teaching was positive. The pupils knew where they stood and what was "right" and what was "wrong." Many children thrived in this atmosphere, and no doubt many of those who thrived did so because they could manage the limited amount of freedom they were given.

We need to remember that there have been and still are many conscientious teachers who believe that their task is to inculcate good habits of discipline and obedience; to impart, by graduated exercises, the specific skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic; and to convey, year by year, month by month, and week by week, a predetermined body of knowledge that, for convenience, is divided into specific subjects. Such teachers are likely to hold the view that children have a natural disinclination to learn, which they—the teachers—must combat. They may also believe that some coercion is necessary and that the child will be spoiled if teachers too readily spare the rod. But the attitude of these teachers is one of care and concern and understanding, and because of this they have often succeeded admirably in the past and will continue to succeed in the future.

WHAT WERE OUR AIMS AND ASSUMPTIONS AND WHERE WERE THEY WRONG?

Much of the earlier, more formal way of teaching was based on aims that were wrongly conceived and on assumptions that were erroneous. The work children did tended to matter more than what happened to the child as a consequence of his doing it. What a child "knew" tended to matter more than the kind of person he was growing into. The work was a by-product of teaching and was more important than the child, who was the product. Again, the shadow was mistaken for the substance.

Authority was often misused, and children were hemmed in by admonitions: Don't talk. Don't move around. Don't get out of line. Don't ask questions. Don't fidget. Don't make a noise. Listen to me. Look at me. Do as I do. Do as I say.

We denied children their right to learn by choosing and discriminating and forming judgments themselves. We created conditions in which it was impossible for children to make mistakes and then we congratulated ourselves because they didn't make them. It was as if a herdsman drove his herd down a long and narrow alley with six-foot walls on either side and then remarked what intelligent beasts they were for going in a dead-straight line.

As a system of education it "worked," but it tended to work best with the most gifted. Those for whom it worked least were often improperly judged dull, ill endowed, and incapable. Teachers didn't know how to use success as an educational tool, and they were unaware of the great significance of failure. We all know now that the child whose parents love him and support him in his endeavors may be safely challenged by failure. We also know that if a child is unloved or regarded with indifference at home and is allowed to fall into a learning situation at school in which he is bound to fail, then home and school are accomplices in distorting his growth as a human being.

The aims and assumptions of our earlier ways of teaching were clear enough to those who pursued them. They can be summed up in part as follows:

- Children have to master the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In order to read, they must pursue a carefully graded course of activity. In order to write correctly, they have to learn the rules of grammar that govern the correct use of English.
- There are basic facts of history and geography that all educated persons should possess, and these should be set out in syllabuses graded according to the age of the children who are to learn them.

• Scripture must be learned and understood because it forms the basis of morality.

• Children should be obedient and honest, and it is a task of the school to make them so. The best way of doing this is by judicious use of rewards and punishments.

• In order to do all these things economically, children should be organized into "homogeneous" ability groups so that all may perform the same task at the same time.

• The main motivation should be competition. Marks should be allotted, and children should be graded according to their marks and encouraged to work hard and improve their marks.

• The general pedagogical principle is: "This is what you have to do; this is how you have to do it; do it and I will mark it to see if you have done it correctly; then I will reward you or punish you accordingly."

In recent years, the validity of these practices and beliefs has been drastically questioned by gifted teachers who have found newer ways. These teachers are saying, for example, that skills are acquired for a purpose. If we become obsessed with the acquisition of skills, we tend to lose sight of the purposes for which they were meant to be used. It is important, for instance, that a child should learn to read, but it is also very important that he should want to read

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what is worth reading. Once a start has been made, generous provision of well-written and carefully graded books that tap a wide range of interests and a wide range of reading difficulty will generally do the rest.

Teachers are saying that learning to write is important—but to write *what?* To record what one has seen or heard is important, but to be able to express one's ideas personally, cogently, and, on occasion, imaginatively is equally important. And what evidence is there for believing that a knowledge of the rules of grammar leads to more expressive writing? If a man knows he is using an expletive, is what he says likely to be more expressive because of this knowledge? As Whitehead said, "There is no necessary connection between literature and grammar."

In the teaching of arithmetic—and of so much else—why do we so often put the cart before the horse? When we learn to play a field game, we play it and we learn the rules as we go along. If we had to study the rules and master them mechanically before we were allowed to play, what would happen to our enthusiasm for the game? But this is how many of us were taught arithmetic, and this is probably why only the adept survived such teaching.

And what about the "body of knowledge everyone should have?" Should everyone

know how many states there are in Australia, or that New York is south of Rome? Should everyone be able to name the constituents of the air we breathe? If so, at what age and at what IQ levels should these facts be known?

Furthermore, since knowledge is doubling every ten years or less, what sense is there in believing that the scraps of it that were used to stimulate *our* juvenile minds will serve equally well to stimulate the minds of our children and our grandchildren? How much of the knowledge crammed into us was fruitful and how much was sterile? How much of it moved our minds to activity and how much was merely acquired for the moment in order that we might make the grade or pass the examination?

And what have we done to children by the way in which we have used art and craft in our school program? When we tell the child what to do and how to do it, when we provide him with patterns to be followed without deviation, all we do is traffic in measurable techniques. Actually, we do more than that: We sever connection with common sense *and* with the principles of pedagogy. Surely, the main purpose of the arts and crafts is to help the child find some creative outlet in which he can succeed and find satisfaction. A child should express his own rather than his teacher's ideas, and he should express them in his own rather than in his teacher's way. *His* imagination and *his* initiative and *his* spontaneity and *his* love of beauty should be given full rein.

As for a knowledge of the Scriptures, does such knowledge really make us more moral or honest? Are atheists or Mohammedans less honest than Christians?

And what about discipline? What, in fact, is the value of discipline enforced by fear? What evidence do we have that a child who acts in a certain way because he fears to do otherwise will continue to act in that way once the fear has been removed? It is like being honest because "honesty is the best policy," because it pays off, rather than being honest because one believes that this is the right way of behaving toward one's fellowmen.

What about the teaching of "homogeneous" groups of children? This surely is nonsense; such groups cannot exist. The learning processes of all children are affected by all kinds of extraneous matters. In any group of children, one will be the most timid and one the most bold; one will come from a home that gives most, another from a home that gives least; one will be the most intelligent, one the least; one the most imaginative, one the least—and so on. To think that somehow or other we can erase these supports or these impediments and arrive at a clean—and uniform—foundation for each child on which progress can be

uilt is pedagogically stupid. And when, nowing of these supports and these im-ediments, we nevertheless grade children cording to their so-called ability in order what we call in our jargon, "motivate" hem, this is surely pedagogical folly of a ry high order indeed. But we still do it.

And how wise is it to try to teach the me thing to 30 children at the same time? it not inevitable that the bright and the nterested will to some extent mark time, hat the dull and the bored will to some xtent fail to keep up, and that the pace ill be set by the average? The folly of ying to teach the same thing at the same me to a group of children comes home to s if we look at what happens when a group f 30 children are asked to tackle the same hysical objective—say a high jump or a ault. The first half-dozen or so will suc-eed because of the way God Almighty or heir physical inheritance has endowed hem—but the teacher takes the credit. The niddle group may improve under instruc-ion. The last half-dozen are likely to prove retchedly clumsy. When that happens, as will, they and their inheritance *and* the Almighty—but not the teacher—take the blame.

What damage have we done by indis-riminate use of external examinations and ests? We have allowed control of the cur-iculum to be handed over to the exam-iners, people who never see the children to whom their tests are applied. Since some things can be measured more readily than others, we have tended to emphasize what can be measured and to undervalue what cannot. And yet, perhaps the things that are most worthwhile are those that cannot be measured. We have looked at IQ tests and aptitude tests, and we have led ourselves to believe that we can make an exact diagnosis of a child's potential. This we certainly cannot do. We have encouraged teachers to expend energy in thwarting the examiner rather than in teaching the child as he should be taught. And when we have looked at the results of an examination, we have exalted those who are "above the line" and disregarded—or even despised—those below it.

And, finally, what matters most in education—what one "knows" or the sort of person he becomes?

These, then, are some of the points that gifted teachers of young children tend to raise as they look at the practices we have followed in English primary schools until recent years and which, unfortunately, we still practice in many of them to this day.

WHAT HAVE WE CHANGED TO?

The outward signs of changes that have taken place in the primary schools are obvious enough. These are some of them:

- Children no longer sit in rows facing the chalkboard; they work in groups or as individuals and arrange their desks accordingly.
- The teacher less frequently gives a formal lesson to the whole class by standing in front of the chalkboard and expounding on a preselected topic. In short, there are far fewer history "lessons" or geography "lessons."
- The whole basis of learning depends less on the facts of a "subject" and far more on an experience of some kind or another that results in either the class going out of the school or in someone or something of interest being brought into it. Such experiences provide material for expression in speech, in writing, in painting, in modeling with clay, and in using many other materials—including material for calculation.
- It follows that the day is no longer broken up as it once was into "lessons" but is "integrated" as the current jargon has it. This means that children work at their own pace on a topic chosen by them from a range carefully prepared by the teacher and that the school bell plays an ever-diminishing part in the organization of the day. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the success of this so-called "integrated day" depends upon the wisdom of the teacher in handling the material and not in merely abolishing the bell. It is also true that a young and inexperienced teacher might need to rely on the structured situation which separate lessons provide.
- Spelling lists, formal exercises in English, and mechanical sums in arithmetic are more rarely used than in the past.
- The teacher tends to conceal or withhold his knowledge rather than reveal it. He does this in the hope that the child will seek knowledge elsewhere and that child and teacher will find out together.
- There are fewer "sets" of books and more individual books. This is true of reference materials and of fiction and poetry as well.

It cannot be too strongly stated, however, that outward signs of change can be most lamentably misleading and deceptive. They should not be accepted as a guarantee of quality in the work produced or, indeed, of understanding on the part of the teacher or the administration. No judgment on the value and quality of any change should be made until appropriate criteria have been applied. For example: What are the standards of achievement? What of progress? What do the ch left on their own? How among them behave to the

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Having said this, I must make it clear that in my experience, and judged by the criteria I have mentioned, there is no doubt that the change in Engish primary schools is a momentous one. And it carries an educational message that we earnestly hope our secondary schools, our universities, and indeed the population at large will receive. Our primary schools, at their best, are models of the kind of social communities in which we would all wish to live.

Well before the last war, we had grasped the value of nursery schools and classes. These were places where children learned to behave socially and sociably together, to give and take, to live and let live, to help others and to share, as well as places in which they began to learn to do up their buttons and attend to life's little necessities. Each child got to know new adults outside his family circle—adults who would listen and who would talk an understandable language all the time. He learned to handle bricks and sand and water, and the resultant mess was not the catastrophe that it was in some homes. There were books to look at and books from which stories were read, and all this whetted the appetite for reading. There were colors and pencils and

clay which tempted the child to take the first steps in painting and drawing and modeling. There was much encouragement; there was time for confidence to grow; and the child became "ready" for school.

Also before the war, many infant schools had begun to forge ahead, although most of these still put the cart before the horse. More often than not, reading began with the alphabet, just as history in the schools invariably began with the ancient Britons. There was much matching of letters and words in isolation—C A T spelled *cat*, and, of course, "the cat sat on the mat," "Tom got his cap wet," and "the pot was on the hob." "Phonics" was the order of the day. And, when the child was ready for them, there were well-known and carefully graded "readers" about nice little middle-class boys and girls.

Writing followed reading, and it tended to begin with pot hooks, followed by letters written in four lines. This was done in order that, as a Yorkshire schoolmaster had said 400 years earlier, they might "write all their words in an even line, with the tops, bellies, and bottoms of the letters of an even size." There followed much writing from copybooks, and writing in those days meant handwriting, whereas today it tends to mean the quality of the English that the child uses. This change in itself is significant.

In painting and drawing, children were taught to "do" houses and trees and men so that they could all be put together into a picture. And while they were being taught in these ways, the children sat in rows at desks facing the teacher who stood before the chalkboard and instructed them.

But the ways have changed. Today, from the start, the child is given an urge to write. He will draw a picture and explain to his interested teacher that he has drawn "our car." The teacher writes underneath it, "This is our car," and the child copies it. The difference between copying this and copying from a copybook is that the child starts with a sentence that is not only meaningful to him but emotionally charged. It is a sentence in which both he and his teacher are interested. Gradually, the child realizes that if he wants to tell his fellows about his affairs and to learn about theirs, reading, writing, and painting are important ways of doing it and they are ways in which his teacher is interested. He must, therefore, master the skills of handwriting and of reading. As he takes these first steps, he comes to see that this word is like that one and that this sound is heard in this word and also in that one. All the time, it is the horse of meaningful expression that pulls the cart of writing and spelling—and not the other way round.

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And so with the beginnings of mathematics. In the nursery school or class, children have already learned the meaning of "big" and "little," "bigger" and "smaller," "lighter" and "heavier." This continues in the early days of the infant schools, when they count and match and group and learn that "three" applies equally to three elephants and to three pins. Here again the horse is before the cart. The desire to do what he wants to be able to do provides the child with the drive to master the mechanical skills that he needs in order to be able to do it.

Once a start has been made in these skills, the object of the teacher is to concentrate on the urge to use the newly acquired skills as a means of expressing personal ideas. The standard lessons in history and geography were no more conducive to this than were the routine compositions on the life of a penny. What has taken their place?

Since World War II, one of the most popular sayings about the learning of young people has been: "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand." The first two of these propositions may be open to debate, but there is very little doubt about the third and this is what the teachers have seized on. If you have actually done something—grown a plant, taken a simple piece of machinery to pieces, or investigated an old building—the

urge to write about it or draw it or read more about it is so much stronger than if you had merely been told about it, and this urge may provide work for a considerable span of time, not only hours but days. There is thus much more drawing, more painting, more modeling than there used to be. And, provided that its purpose is understood, all of it serves to establish the success that gives rise to the confidence on which educational progress is built.

Formal lessons have become far less frequent than they used to be, and the object of teaching is not, for example, to give the child a systematic chronological account of history from its storybook beginnings but to provide worthwhile experiences for further investigation. Grandfather probably knows what the area was like 60 years ago, and, what is more, he knows what *his* grandfather told him. Grandfather's possessions are history. The objects of these early days, collected and brought to school, provide endless opportunity for discussion, for painting, writing, modeling, and calculating. So, of course, do visits to the railway station, the canal lock, the power station, the farm, the church, and the nearest factory. If the child is fortunate enough to attend a school that is supplied by an imaginative resources center, he will benefit from all kinds of objects that can be brought into the school. These will range from collections of butterflies to a model of a coal mine or a penny farthing bicycle. Then there are pets of all kinds in the schools, and these can be drawn and painted and their ways and habits recorded in paint and writing. One of the minor mysteries of life is the way a guinea pig will stand motionless on a table and allow itself to be drawn and modeled and painted.

The children work individually or in groups, as the need strikes them. Those who are quick to learn use easily the generous supply of material available, and the teacher thus has time to help the slow over their difficulties. Some children write, some paint, some make music, and some calculate. The task of the teacher is to see that no child overlooks any worthwhile medium of expression.

The day is much less rigidly scheduled than it used to be, although physical education may make some scheduling of time necessary if the hall with its physical education apparatus has to be used. And it is perhaps in the use of this apparatus that the greatest change has come about. Routine exercises have disappeared and team competitions are fewer than they once were. The subject of physical education has been widened to include not only gymnastics and games but also dance and drama. Far less is imposed on the children and far more drawn from them. I shall not

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readily forget the alarm of an American superintendent of schools when I took him into a school hall where 6-year-olds were swarming up ropes to the ceiling and climbing about on beams only a few feet below it. The aim of the teacher was to see that each child should achieve success and the confidence that it brings—a confidence that can be transferred to the three R's which are still as important as they ever were, although the learning of them has so radically changed.

The results of writing and of painting show this change. Let us consider for a moment tw
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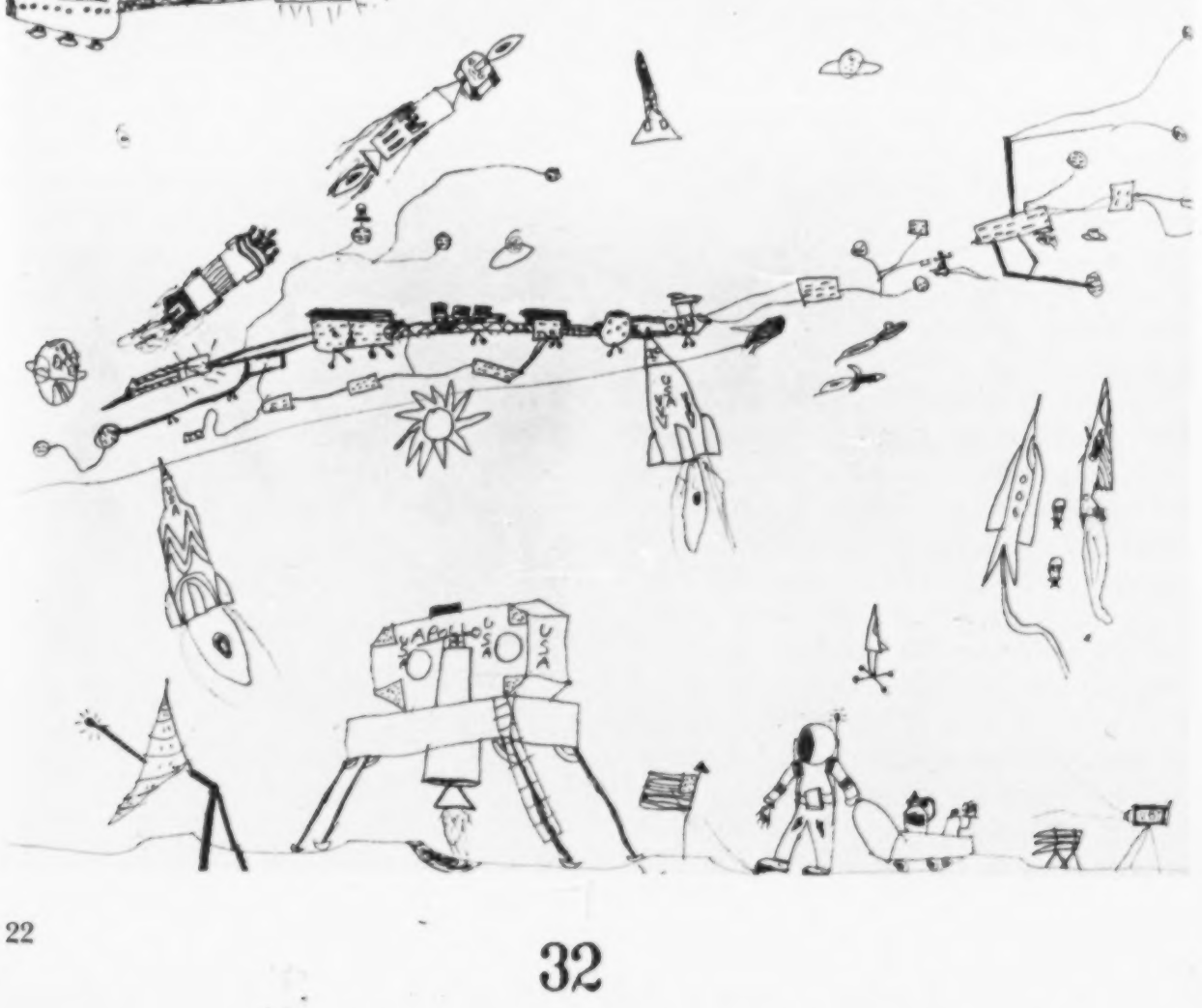

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The results of writing and of painting show this change. Let us consider for a moment two pieces of writing from an 8-year-old girl in a village school.

The first piece is the kind of thing that we have come to expect from a bright little 8-year-old. This girl is interested in a cat; she has, no doubt, been encouraged to examine one carefully, and she has read about cats and mastered words like *sensitive, fang, carnivorous, mammals,* and *retractable.* A book she read has played an obvious part in what she has written:

"A cat is a mammal. The eyes are very good for seeing at night because the pupil opens up more so that more light goes in. Their whiskers are very sensitive. The whiskers are the same length as the fattest part of their body, so when they go through a hole if the whiskers can not fit through the hole they can not. The two very long and sharp teeth in the mouth of a cat are called fangs. Cats are carnivorous mammals. Also the eyes are on the front of the head which means he is an animal of prey. When the eyes are on the side of the head it is an animal that is hunted. A cat is always warm because it has soft cuddly fur. The claws of a cat are retractable so that when he walks out he does not break them. His ears are also movable."

True enough. But one of the main purposes of writing is to be able not merely

to record but also to convey one's sensitive, imaginative, and personal feelings. Such writing may take the form of prose or it may take the form of verse, rhymed or unrhymed.

The piece that follows was written by the same child who wrote about cats. It was written after the village school had been visited by a theatre group that had produced a play called *From Sea to Sky*. Following this play, one corner of the classroom had been turned into a kind of underwater kingdom, and much that the children then did was connected with the sea.

STILL AND LONELY
(by Louise Holmes, age 8)

Wading in the sea
so cold, so alone.
I stumble and fall
to the bottom of a strange new kingdom.
Everything is so still and lonely.
Sometimes I see melancholy fish swimming slowly by.
The lonely, still sea all around my gliding body moves gently,
Wrecked ships from long ago,
Oysters with hidden pearls,
Waving seaweed, seen once in a lifetime.
All so marvellous it must be a dream.
My hair floating in the calm, gentle sea.
Waving seaweed, or lines of colour
all so wonderful it must be a dream.
Floating along go mermaids and mermen
With long golden hair drifting in the cloud of water
Endless water
All so still and beautiful.
Nets catching fish.
Goodbye fish!
Crawling creatures
Still creatures
Youth creatures playing
Pink, yellow, red, blue, black.
All so colourful.
The deep sea kingdom is so wonderful so glorious
Shells lying on the bottom of the sea
all colours,
smooth to my touch.
Crabs moving from side to side
blowing bubbles.
Stones and shells,
rocks,
all to be seen,
but no human beings ever will.
This kingdom is so lovely,
yet still and lonely.
So quiet.
So noisy above.
Nothing disturbs the silence.
They all keep quiet,
hiding as I swim by,
watching my slow moving body
so different from thei
What an adventure fo
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Waving seaweed, or lines of colour
all so wonderful it must be a dream.
Floating along go mermaids and mermen
With long golden hair drifting in the
cloud of water
Endless water
All so still and beautiful.
Nets catching fish.
Goodbye fish!
Crawling creatures
Still creatures
Youth creatures playing
Pink, yellow, red, blue, black.
All so colourful.
The deep sea kingdom is so wonderful
so glorious
Shells lying on the bottom of the sea
all colours,
smooth to my touch.
Crabs moving from side to side
blowing bubbles.
Stones and shells,
rocks,
all to be seen,
but no human beings ever will.
This kingdom is so lovely,
yet still and lonely.
So quiet.
So noisy above.
Nothing disturbs the silence.
They all keep quiet,
hiding as I swim by,
watching my slow moving body
so different from theirs.

What an adventure for
a plain person
like me!

This second, imaginative, expressive piece would have been very rare 30 years ago, and the likelihood is that it would have been a "sport"—something written for personal diversion, not a part of a school program, and not the product of wise and inspired teaching. The intentions of the teachers have indeed changed. A teacher who was teaching 30 years ago has described the way in which he encouraged children to write a composition on lighting a fire. These are his notes:

"1. The teacher discusses the material required—sticks, newspaper, coal, matches. He 'teaches' the difference between 'thorough' and 'through.'

"2. He discusses the laying of the fire and teaches the difference between 'lay' and 'lie,' 'laid' and 'lied.' He mentions cleaning the grate (difference between 'grate' and 'great'), crumple, and the placing of sticks and coal.

"3. He discusses lighting the newspaper, where to light, how to strike a match to avoid danger."

This kind of preparation led to 40 grammatically accurate, correctly spelled, but

somewhat sterile compositions, and if this was the result the teacher wanted, then his preparation was sound enough. Here is one of the compositions:

"Before you light the fire you must prepare thoroughly. You have to get the sticks, the coal and some newspapers before you begin. When you have got these things or you can call them materials, you have to take out the ashes from the grate. When you have raked out the ashes from the grate, you put the newspaper in. Then you put some sticks on. Then you put some coal on. When you have put these things or materials on, you light a match.

"You must know how to light a match before you strike it. You must hold the box in one hand and hold the match in the other and pull the match away from you so as to avoid danger.

"You then light the paper."

Twenty years later, the teacher had changed his aims. He was as concerned with the personal expression of the child and the development of his individuality as he was with spelling and handwriting. Moreover, he had realized the value of Locke's words: "Never trouble yourself about those Faults in them, which you know Age will cure."

The village fish and chip shop had caught fire and the teacher seized on the excitement of the occasion to get from each child a description of a particular fire which he had lit. Only one boy wrote about lighting a domestic fire, and this is what he wrote:

"When my Mam and Dad won't get up me and our Alan get up and light the fire. I rake out the deadness from the grate and our Alan chops some of my Dad's shedwood. We put the newspaper in the grate but don't squash it too tight or it won't burn so good. Put the sticks in and then some nice pieces of best Barnsley seam coal. This is the best coal in the world my Dad says. Then we put the shovel on the bars and a big piece of newspaper over that to blow it up. Now its all ready to light the paper. If it won't go I get some of my Dad's paraffin in a pop bottle and throw it on. This makes it go smashing. If the blow up paper catches fire I have to shout my Dad and he comes down in his shirt swearing and clips us. I like lighting fires."

The preceding examples illustrate clearly the change of emphasis that has taken place in the teaching of writing in recent years.

There has been a similar change in the teaching of arithmetic. When I was young, my arithmetic consisted of "doing sums." Recently, I was talking with an inspector colleague of mine about how changes had occurred and how th
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There has been a similar change in the teaching of arithmetic. When I was young, my arithmetic consisted of "doing sums." Recently, I was talking with an inspector colleague of mine about how changes had occurred and how the child's surroundings were now used to give him an understanding that I never had. My colleague told me, for example, how teachers will use the tiles of a hall floor to help them in their teaching. First of all, a child would find the number by counting. Then the question would be asked: Is there an easier and quicker way? Perhaps 37 rows of 19 tiles (or 19 rows of 37 tiles)? How do we do this? Add nineteen 37's together—or thirty-seven 19's?

Such investigations lead to an understanding of long multiplication as repeated addition. What is the most economical way of doing this? The conventional way of thirty-seven 10's and thirty-seven 9's? Or perhaps, in this case, thirty-seven 20's minus 37 would be quicker. But the important thing is that the children have a chance to think about different ways and to compare methods, and their own experience will provide the urge to do so. Eventually, of course, they will need to know an economic method that always works, and this is often, although not always, the traditional method.

Another example that suggests the same approach is that of measurement, where a child will pass through various stages:

1a. Measuring length (or weight or capacity) by arbitrary units; for example, handspans, strides, foot lengths, and so forth, leading on to:

b. Standardized units, yardsticks, metre sticks, and so forth, and statements like "this room is 10 yards and a bit long."

c. Refining measurement so that you can say more exactly how many feet and how many inches long.

One hopes that the child will also develop an appreciation of the suitability of certain measures and an awareness of approximation and degrees of accuracy. For example, one needs to contrast the degree of accuracy in measuring, on the one hand, the distance from the earth to the sun, and, on the other, the distance between the point of the gap of a spark plug.

2. The measurement of height offers interesting material for the mind to work on. It is important that children use their measuring not just to develop arithmetic but also to think about different ways of tackling a job.

In finding the height of a building, for example, they might:

a. Estimate—a process traditionally neglected.

b. Compare with the height of a friend.

c. Count the number of bricks.

d. Investigate the length of the shadow.

e. Use simple apparatus—even a cardboard, right-angled triangle can provide a good result after a scale drawing is made.

f. Eventually some children may well devise an accurate trigonometrical method.

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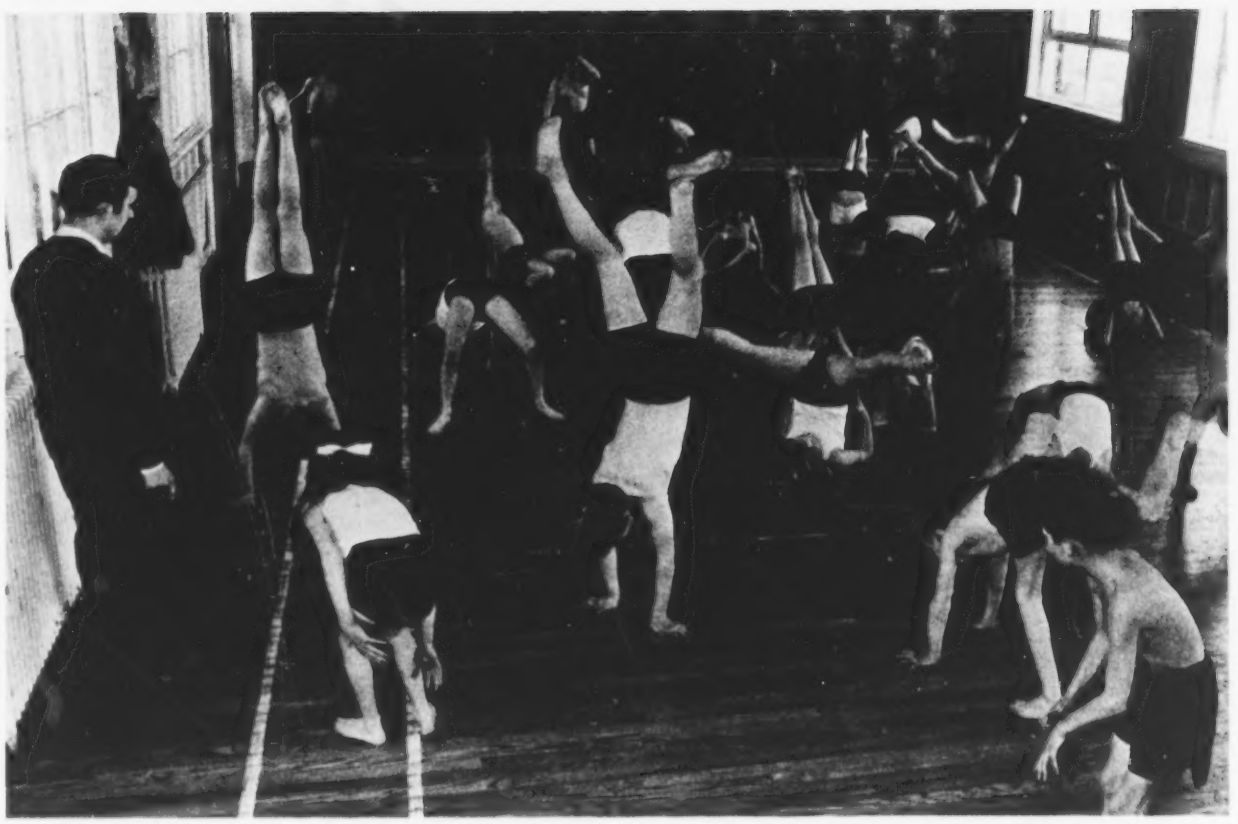

After my colleague had explained all this to me, he told me about Jeremy, a boy who forged ahead after having been introduced to new methods, whereas he probably would not have made anything like the same progress if he had been kept on with the old methods.

Jeremy had transferred from a formal school to one where practical activities and individual approaches to mathematics were encouraged. During his two years of very formal work in his first school, he had derived satisfaction from habitually obtaining full marks for all his sums. On arriving at his new school at the age of 9, he was at first somewhat bewildered by the different emphasis. After an initial period where he was allowed to maintain his security by continuing familiar work, he was gradually encouraged to strike off in new directions on his own. He was soon able to talk about what he had been doing. Shortly after his tenth birthday, he described his work as follows:

"I saw in a book about there being a relationship between the squares of whole numbers so I wrote down the cubes of all the numbers from 1 to 20 and decided to see if I could find a similar relationship. First I found the differences between them, and then the differences between the differences. I found I got part of a six times table. So I thought that I ought to be able

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to work back from this and I carried on the table starting with the differences between the differences and so got the cube of 21, the cube of 22, and so on."

He set out his work:

		Difference	Difference
1^3	1		
		7	
2^3	8		12
		19	
3^3	27		18
		37	
4^3	64		24
		61	
5^3	125		,
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He eventually went on to generalize his answer, and said: "I thought that this showed that there was a way of working out the cube of any number from the cube of the previous number and I found that if any number was called 'n' the cube of the next number would be

$$'n^3 + 3n^2 + 3n + 1.'"$$

Jeremy had also developed his own work on "Magic Square," finally constructing his own square of 16 or 17 rows and columns and explaining to a visitor: "It is very easy to work out once you've understood the pattern."

In Jeremy's case, one must, of course, make allowances for exceptional brilliance, but even so, one cannot help contrasting the way in which he had been allowed to think along his own lines and develop his own mathematical ideas with the way in which his previous mathematical education had been restricted to routine work with arithmetical processes. And one should also contrast the demands made on him in his new way of working with the demands of the former situation where he always obtained full marks without really being asked to exert any mathematical "thinking" as he worked.

A Summing Up

What, overall, can we expect to find in an English primary school today that reflects changes that have been made? Let me put it this way: When I go into what I would call "a good school" today, whether the building is new or whether it was built in the last century, I would expect to find light, colorful classrooms with a broad band of pin-up board around the walls on which examples of work from *all* the children in the group are carefully and lovingly displayed at one time or another. In the main, this work would be painting and drawing, but there would also be some mathematics and some written expression—poetry and prose. In all likelihood, I would

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Desks and tables would be arranged in groups rather than in rows. Somewhere in the room there would most certainly be a table on which were set out natural objects that were both beautiful and scientifically interesting. Elsewhere in the room there might be a well-arranged display of fabrics and other objects of interest and beauty, designed to emphasize textures, colors, and shapes. There might be some small animals kept as pets in the room. And there would certainly be a generous and easily accessible supply of books of reference and fiction.

Some children would be standing, some sitting, some talking, some walking, some working intently. One child might be painting; another might be arranging flowers. Two children with a stopwatch might be observing ball bearings rolling down a plank, while a third child tabulates the results. One group might be potato printing on fabric; others would be reading, writing, measuring, modeling, or calculating.

After the initial activities period, it is likely that the class might settle down to pursue a piece of work resulting from a recent visit to a water canal lock, a post office, a sewage works, a power station, or some other place of interest and excitement.

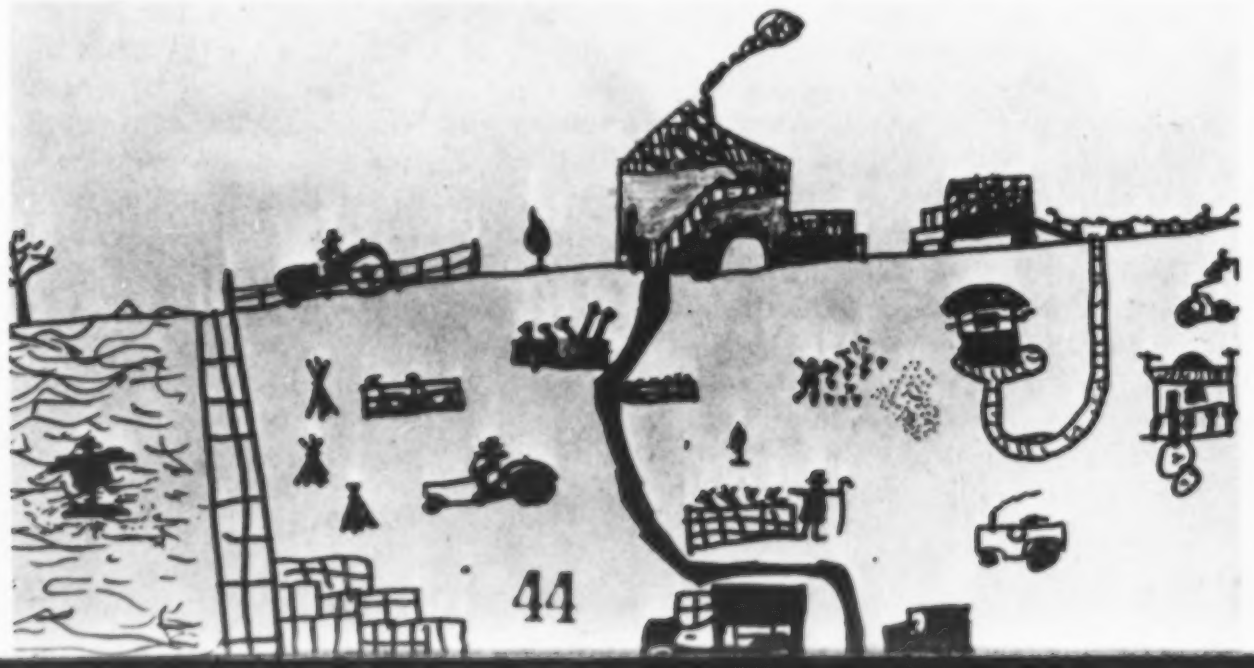
Under the stimulus of this experience, some would paint, some write, some calculate, some read and investigate. Other children might be pursuing a completely different topic. But, under the stimulus of a first-hand experience, and with abundant interest, all children would be engaged in something that in other, more formal schools would fall into the often arid compartments of history, geography, English, and mathematics.

In the school I am talking about, such technical matters as spelling would be dealt with as adults would deal with them—by looking up in small dictionaries the word that is needed in the context of the moment.

In a classroom in this school, I might have some momentary difficulty in locating the teacher. He would be acting more as a consultant, and would speak when spoken to. But his main task—and this is a professional task of the highest order that I, as a schoolmaster, didn't exert because I taught the whole class at once—would be to keep a watchful eye on what each pupil was doing in order to be certain that the child did not forego or neglect any important area of learning. There would, of course, be times when the whole class was called to attention to deal with a teaching point of common concern, but the teacher would be spending much of his time giving individual help, particularly to slow learners.

When a child raises a question and the teacher does not know the answer, he would not hesitate to admit it. Often, if he *knew* the answer, he would be reluctant to give it lest an opportunity for drawing out the child's initiative be lost.

There would, of course, be activities



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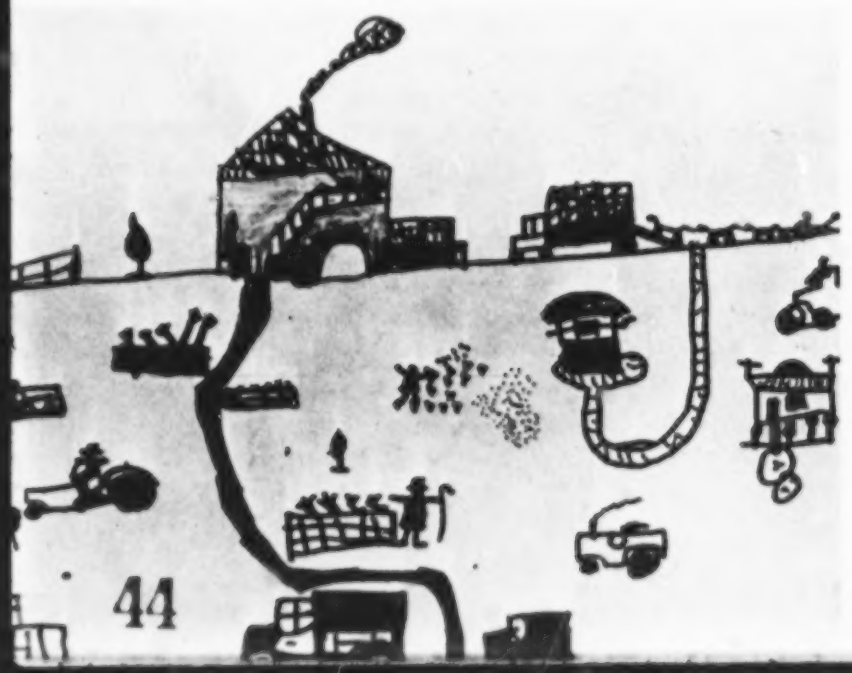

shared by the whole class as, for instance, when they sang together, or went into the hall for what we call, unfortunately perhaps, a "movement lesson." This is a physical activity—sometimes gymnastic, sometimes dramatic—based very largely on the inspiration from Rudolf von Laban, a refugee from Hitler, who introduced this work and modern dance into England and whose most distinguished disciple is probably Martha Graham. This activity will be discussed in more detail later.

In a school such as I am describing, I should expect pupils to start work first thing in the morning, whether the teacher was there or not. Indeed, on the previous evening, many of the pupils would have been able to say what they intended to do first thing in the morning. The number able to do this would be an indication of the responsibility that the school successfully laid on its pupils. And I have seen not only children of 10 or 11 settle down to a day's work with no teacher present but also tiny children no more than 5 or 6 years old.

These, then, are some of the things we can expect to find in a good English primary school today.

THE CLIMATE OF CHANGE

This publication is concerned with the change that has taken place in our primary schools—schools for children of ages 8 to 12—since World War II. The harbinger of the move forward was the change that occurred in the earlier decades of the century in the teaching of much younger children. In 1918, the new Education Act recognized the nursery school on which so much work had been done by Margaret and Rachel McMillan in the City of Bradford. The Malting House School, directed by Susan Isaacs, had also made conspicuous forward strides in the university town of Cambridge.

In 1926, Bertrand Russell published his book, *On Education,* in which he, like Whitehead, his great collaborator, sought to turn the minds of teachers away from the imparting of sterile facts to the development of character and personality. An aristocrat himself, Russell berated the aristocratic education devised by Thomas Arnold of Rugby, of which he said sympathy, kindliness, and imagination were sacrificed to toughness, energy, and unalterable beliefs. He was against the classical tradition of education because, as he wrote, "this tends to produce a kind of cold correctness in which originality is replaced by respect for authority." He believed that every child should have the joy of success; that each child should work at his own pace; that the infant's urge to work is so strong that all we have to do is to provide the opportunity. He also believed that all children, including the youngest, should be treated with respect, that the most severe punishment that ought to be necessary is the natural spontaneous expression of indignation, that children are often best taught by children, that to kill fantasy in a child is to make it a slave to what exists. He believed also that vitality, courage, sensitivity, and intelligence are the four great components of character and that their development should be the main target of the educational process. There is no doubt whatever that these views are held by all good teachers of infants and juniors in England today and are strikingly exemplified in their schools.

The ideas of the McMillan sisters and of Susan Isaacs began to be sensibly applied in the new nursery schools and eventually moved up into the infant schools, but an unfortunate mishmash of the ill-understood ideas of Bertrand Russell, Caldwell Cook and his "play way," A. S. Neil, John Dewey, and others began to coagulate into what was known as progressive education based on so-called free play and free expression. This movement ran its course in the 1920's in the progressive schools of Great Britain and America, and only a few schools then in existence survived the ill rep
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In the early 1930's, the teaching of primary school children came under official scrutiny. The Consultative Committee of the Board of Education, sitting under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Hadow, produced the *Report of the Primary School.* Two sentences of this report are probably the most quoted of all educational words uttered this century in England. The first of these is, "What a wise and good parent would desire for his own children, that a nation must desire for all children." This was but an expansion of Rachel McMillan's statement, "Educate every child as if he were your own."

The second statement is even better known and has been much more often quoted: "We are of the opinion that the curriculum of the primary school is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored."

The extraordinary thing about this statement is that when it was written there could have been very few teachers in England, particularly teachers of children of

ages 7 to 11, who had any idea at all of what this might mean in practice. Yet today, I know of no more moving educational experience than to go into schools in which these precepts are being put effectively to work. Using these precepts, schools are achieving results, not only in terms of the three R's but also in the development of initiative, imagination, sensitivity, and creative effort, which, I suspect, even Russell did not foresee.

It is likely that this 1931 report was the turning point, and it is the first chapter of the report that is so telling, even today. The following sentences are taken from it:

"The aim of the school is to introduce its pupils to such experiences in an orderly and intelligent manner, so as to develop their innate powers and to awaken them to the basic interests of civilised existence."

"Teachers must be guided by their own insight and experience, and must use the methods which they are conscious they can use best. With these qualifications, however, we are with the majority of our witnesses strongly of the opinion that primary education would gain greatly in realism and power of inspiration if an attempt were more generally made to think of the curriculum less in terms of departments of knowledge to be taught, and more in terms of activities to be fostered and interests to

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"The essential point is that the curriculum should not be loaded with inert ideas and crude blocks of fact, which are devoid of significance till related to some interest in the minds of the pupils. It must be vivid, realistic, a stream in motion, not a stagnant pool."

"A boy is interested in steam engines; let him start from his interests, make a rough model of an engine, discover something about the historical process of its invention and improvement, read a little about the changes in the life of society which have been produced by it, make a map of the transport system of his own town and country, learn something about the lives of famous engineers, and study in outline the part which steam plays in linking together different parts of the world."

"Children visit a place of historical interest, a church, a castle, the site of a British or Roman camp; let their work before and after the visit be planned round it, and the pupils be told of its place in history, paint such features of it as they can, make a map of the surrounding region, and act where possible some of the famous scenes associated with it, making the dresses and scenery for themselves."

"If there is a place, and a place of high significance, for collective teaching, and for lessons that bring together a class of pupils

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"The essential point is that the curriculum should not be loaded with inert ideas and crude blocks of fact, which are devoid of significance till related to some interest in the minds of the pupils. It must be vivid, realistic, a stream in motion, not a stagnant pool."

"A boy is interested in steam engines; let him start from his interests, make a rough model of an engine, discover something about the historical process of its invention and improvement, read a little about the changes in the life of society which have been produced by it, make a map of the transport system of his own town and country, learn something about the lives of famous engineers, and study in outline the part which steam plays in linking together different parts of the world."

"Children visit a place of historical interest, a church, a castle, the site of a British or Roman camp; let their work before and after the visit be planned round it, and the pupils be told of its place in history, paint such features of it as they can, make a map of the surrounding region, and act where possible some of the famous scenes associated with it, making the dresses and scenery for themselves."

"If there is a place, and a place of high significance, for collective teaching, and for lessons that bring together a class of pupils with the heightened glow born of common effort, there is also a place, and a not less important one, for individual study, and for the co-operative work of small groups of children, who teach themselves in assisting each other, and in the guidance of whom the function of the teacher is less that of an expositor than of an adviser and consultant."

I must again emphasize that these points can be only partially understood unless one has seen the ideas that they offer being put into practice, and this one can now do—easily and often. But we must not delude ourselves. The ideas can be badly put into practice by people who have only half-understood the principles that lie behind them or by people who are far too hasty in their implementation of change. When this happens, the effect is perhaps not as bad as it can be in the most fear-ridden of formal schools, but it is nevertheless bad. More will be said about this later.

There is one further step to which reference should be made in any attempt to describe the climate in which educational change has taken place.

In the late 1930's, education over most of the country became static because of the war. It was all that most local authorities could do just to keep the schools staffed and equipped. However, in 1940, a man named

Arthur Stone was appointed Headmaster of Steward Street Primary School in Birmingham. There were 240 children in this school. Most of them lived in back-to-back houses with no bathrooms, and with few window panes because much of the glass had been blasted from their windows by bombs. The playground of this dismal school was overlooked by tall factories; no blade of grass grew near it. The teachers were "just an ordinary inartistic lot." But Stone believed that children must be free to develop and "that it is in the creation of beauty that the true development of the individual emerges." He knew little of the great thinkers on education such as Froebel and Rousseau and Dewey, but he had learned of the work of Cizek from the lectures of one of his disciples, Dr. Viola, who was working in the country at the time.

I visited this school in the early 1940's. To me, a Cambridge Modern Language graduate who had done four years of grammar school teaching and a year or two in administration, it was a very odd place indeed. They were so short of space in this lamentably inadequate building that there were children in the cloakrooms painting on sheets of paper spread on the floor. There were children "acting" in the hall, having dressed themselves up in all kinds of odd garments and pieces of cloth. But the thing that struck me about this school was the fact that the children were utterly engrossed and absorbed in what they were doing. This quality of absorption has been the criterion of efficiency in teaching to which, from that day onward, I have attached the greatest importance.

Arthur Stone eventually wrote down his experience in a pamphlet entitled *The Story of a School.* It was published for the Ministry of Education by His Majesty's Stationery Office in 1949. It has since been reissued six times. Stone, with whom I have had the satisfaction of working as a colleague for 20 years or more and to whom I am indebted for a lifetime of interest in educational ideas, now claims that he is horrified by much that he then wrote. But I continue to believe that his pamphlet is the most effective statement so far produced in England on the development of new ways in lamentable social and material circumstances. The fact that it is still in demand more than 20 years after it was written is some evidence of the influence it has had.

But national recognition and support for all the changes that were taking place came in 1966 when the Central Advisory Council published their massive two-volume report of some 1,200 pages, entitled "Children in Their Primary Schools." The Advisory Council at this time sat under the presidency of Lady Bridget Plowden and the re-

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"I am convinced that the method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation is incomparably the best; since not content with serving up a few barren and lifeless truths, it leads to the stock on which they grow: it tends to set the learner himself on the track of invention and to direct him into those paths in which the author has made his own discoveries."

HOW CHANGE CAME ABOUT IN ONE AREA IN THE POST-WAR YEARS

It has been a matter of intense interest to me—an administrator used to dealing with selection for secondary schools, awards to the universities, and free meals and clothing for needy children—to watch, over a 20-year span, the development of the fundamentals of education as seen, not in intelligence tests or reading techniques or history syllabuses, but in the way children dance and paint and write and behave one to another.

Just after the war, a very small group of people had become interested in the work of Rudolf von Laban, a fugitive from Hitler who had come to England with fascinating ideas about the use of movement in the dance, in work, and in education. Another small group was interested in the children's art revealed by the great teacher Cizek who worked in Vienna.

I was fortunate in that I recruited Diana Jordan, Basil Rocke, and Arthur Stone to my staff as advisers to schools. Diana Jordan was a disciple of von Laban and in 1938 had written a book entitled *The Dance in Education*. Basil Rocke was a painter in his own right and had worked with Cizek. Arthur Stone had experimented on his own account in his school on Steward Street in Birmingham.

In 1948, these three people and other kindred spirits formed the staff of a vacation course (or workshop as it might now be called in the United States). The course was attended in the main by men and women who had recently returned from His Majesty's Forces. By and large, they were a "tough bunch" and their wants were simple. They wanted to know what changes had occurred in education while they were away and how to put them into operation. They expected that chalk and talk would tell them "how to do it." Instead, they were required to dance and to paint. They were skeptical, and at times ribald.

In their "movement" sessions, instead of being given gymnastic lessons, they explored the time and force of movement in space. But the movements they made were theirs; they did not follow a pattern prescribed by the teachers. Almost despite themselves, the course participants became absorbed in what they were doing.

The art session was taught by an extremely gifted and dynamic colleague, Ruth Scrivener, who has since written books on the teaching of art and on the imagination. Her account of what happened was written for me some years later. The following is an extract from it:

"I think I devoted four sessions to draw-

ing and painting (there were others in which we did modeling) and I took as topics:

"1. the practical organisation of the media and equipment and of the room to be used for the art class;

"2. the various media which are likely to be helpful and inspiring to a child and the possibilities in the use of them;

"3. the subjects which will extend a child's visual curiosity and appreciation both of the natural world and of the materials at his disposal;

"4. the quality of development and improvement which the teacher can justifiably expect and look for in a child's work and how he can assess it.

"I chose these topics because I wanted to give the teachers as much practical help as possible at a time when materials were still in short supply and most schools were ill equipped for creative work. I also wanted to emphasise the importance of the quality of the medium in drawing and painting and that each child must develop his own control of it if the work is to have any significance as a personal expression of his visual experience. I discussed subjects at length to show how a wise choice of subject helps a child to realise—through his own interest, and therefore most profoundly—some new aspect both of the visual world and of the media he is using. Finally I hoped that the teachers would learn to enjoy and appreciate a child's natural—and considerable—achievement in drawing and painting, to realise how he develops at his own time and in his own way, and to understand that while one never can, or should, anticipate the results of an art class—for every picture should be a surprise as the original expression of an individual experience—there are certain efforts which we must encourage, particularly in concentration and control."

The significant thing about the movement and the art was that neither followed the teacher's pattern; both thrust the initiative on the child and drew expression from him.

The results of the course initially were meager. In fact, for some time they were hardly discernible. Then I received a note from Miss Jordan, at that time a physical education adviser, that ran as follows:

"The 'progress' of this school in the new approach is steady. The 'art' side still leads and flowers even more fully each term. I think that the art is really the best I have ever seen or imagined from a junior school. But the result of the whole philosophy in practice is that this interest and learning process so evident in the art is *beginning* to affect the academic side. I have not had the

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"But one practical problem is arising, i.e., adequate provision of materials. This is affected in one or two ways and I quote an example or two:

"I. The development of the art rests upon sufficient paper and art materials and, since every child is pouring out his ideas boldly and increasingly, naturally there is more and more demand. In addition, on wet days in the dinner hour there have been as many as 180 children found in the classrooms working unsupervised, seriously and fully absorbed in painting, modeling, writing and reading. (This has necessitated having the materials available to them and has been neatly organised. It is to be noted that there is *no waste* of materials, owing to the children's control.)

"II. Composition books: Whereas a child took 18 months to fill a composition book, they now in some cases use as much as 1½ books a term. I am sending you this evidence with notes on the 'cases.' When you look at the books you will see what I mean. The awakened imagination and freed expression is beginning to produce a *flow* of language that can't be stopped. The requisition for exercise books is becoming a prob-

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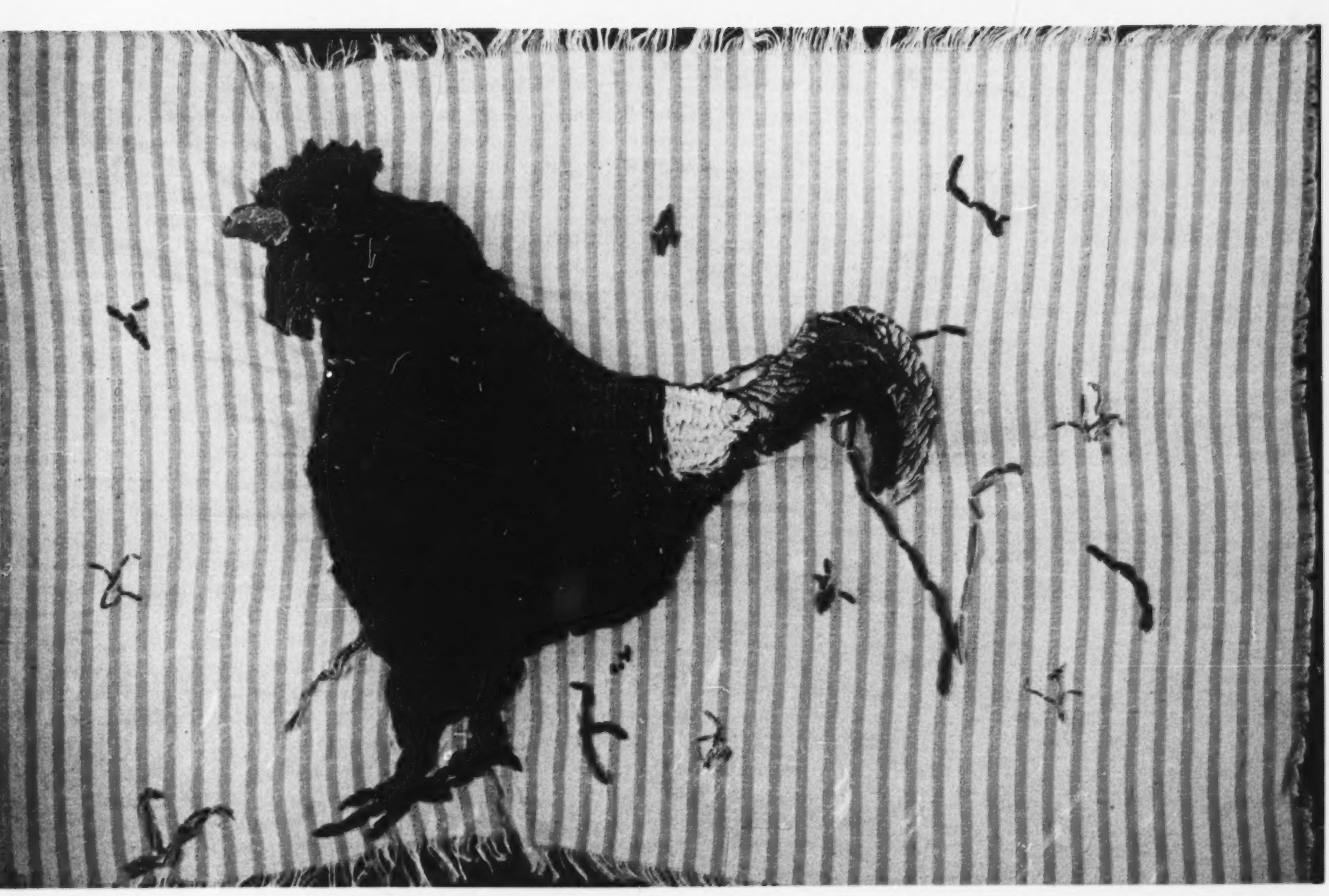

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lem as are pens and pencils, besides art materials. This all being on capitation is about to produce a problem in this school. Mr. Jones, the headmaster, has discussed it all with the divisional officer, Mr. Stockdale, who is also very interested in the school. Mr. Jones is now approximately £10 overdrawn on his capitation allowance with the spring term to go and the 'pinch' will come about March at the latest. He told me that two heads of schools had said they didn't know how they could spend the capitation allowance! It is thought to be very fair, not to say generous—but on the approach which Mr. Jones is making and which we hope will spread it is going to be a problem. He said he would be willing for me to tell you this as a matter of principle, and *not* as a complaint—a bare statement of a problem now very near to him.

"If you would like any particular evidence and facts will you let me know?"

There followed two incidents that made a deep impression on me at the time. One of our advisers came to me one day with some children's drawings, the quality of which I had not seen before. The drawings were from the school about which Miss Jordan had written. Children in the infants' school had been arranging flowers, and their older brothers and sisters in the junior school had asked to paint them. I was so surprised that I visited the school and spoke to the headmaster, Mr. Jones, who told me what had happened in his school, following the Bingley course. He had spoken to his staff and had been met with blank disbelief. He, also disbelieving, had taught the children himself and had achieved results that had astonished both himself and his staff. Not wishing to get involved in obstinate argument with his colleagues, he left a few paintings carelessly on the staffroom table, and the disbelief of his colleagues changed to a mounting enthusiasm as the children's work developed.

The second incident occurred at another school where the headmaster, Mr. Gordon, had been deeply affected by the course at Bingley. The school he directed was situated in a tough mining area, and one day when I visited it I was deeply impressed by two facts. The first was that a group of 38 ten-year-olds, using powder paint, were left working on their own, entirely unattended and deeply absorbed in what they were doing. The other was that around the school hall were hung 38 paintings of flowers, the like of which I had not seen from children of that age. The consistency of their quality was remarkable, and it had not been achieved by "instruction." Each child was painting in his own way from his direct observation of what was before him. A thought occurred to me then that has

often occurred to me since: Any group of 38 children working in this way would achieve these results. I have kept these paintings because of their effect on my thinking, although their quality has been far surpassed by what has been done in our schools in more recent years. The effect of the Bingley Vacation Course on Mr. Gordon was recorded in his words some years later:

"I came out of the Forces in 1946 after 5 years service. Those 5 years had seen intensive activity in re-thinking and re-planning on many national questions such as the launching of the Welfare State, nationalisation, and the 1944 Education Act. But it struck me, on returning to teaching, that the school had maintained a sort of monastic indifference to the changes going on outside it. I was amazed, for instance, to find my pre-war current affairs charts still on the display panels showing Hitler shaking hands with Chamberlain at Munich!

"In order to bring myself up to date I turned to a refresher course offered by a university on the Psychology of Education. It is perfectly true when I say that I found the same stuff repeated that I had notes of 20 years previously—with one magnificent change—an instinct was now referred to as 'a propensity.' I can remember, along with others in the course, feeling very disgusted that a University Education Department had nothing more to offer in 20 years than a pedantic re-hash of old ideas and methods.

"In 1948 however I had the good fortune to attend the Bingley Course on Primary Education. It was there that I realized most forcibly that all had not been standing still in the world of education as I thought. The course for me brought meaning to the 1931 Consultative Committee's Report on the Primary school.

". . . I became aware of the immense value of art and craft work, of movement and mime and creative physical education in helping a child to express those other qualities that were in him over and above the purely intellectual. I realised that I had expected the slow-learning child to express himself in written and spoken English only, something he found extremely difficult and where constant failure led to despair and apathy. In art, mime and movement he was given other media through which to release his thoughts, emotions and imagination. Success here gave him confidence and a new incentive to overcome his academic failings.

"I realised too that all my art and craft teaching had been based on wrong principles. I had imposed my own interpretation of a subject on the child, leaving no opportunity for him to interpret it in his

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own way. Every subject I gave him to do I drew first on the blackboard myself (carefully copied from a book or some teachers' journal) and told him to copy it. At the end of the lesson there were 50 to 60 paintings, all identical as if run off on a duplicator. During the lesson I would nip smartly round the whole class to touch up here or overcome a difficulty there. At the end of the lesson the six best were always exhibited in a picture frame kept for the purpose. That was the hardest part of the lesson—to choose the six best—because they were all alike. Everything we did in art was judged on its photographic likeness to the subject. It was a standard set by the unenlightened and unappreciative adult who lacked sensitivity.

". . . Bingley made me realise how much we had imposed ourselves on the children and stifled creativeness. In art we had shown them how to do it and they had copied. In craft they made models out of cardboard to our instructions. In drama we had made talking marionettes of them. We had supplied the language for them in written English. We drove them from poetry by forcing it on them. In PT we drilled them to numbers. In most other subjects we rammed the facts home.

"Since, we have tried to give the child more guidance, more opportunity to express himself in a variety of ways and with

imagination, to observe and to search for himself, to give out more as well as to take in, and to establish a personal and sensitive relationship with his teachers, his fellows and the world around him."

About this time, there followed developments in two other schools out of the 1,000 or so in the country. In each of the two schools, developments were in what we called "movement." These schools used "basic movement" as their point of departure, and from this they branched out to gymnastics and games and also to "expressive" or "dramatic" movement. Nothing I have ever seen children do has touched me more deeply than the dramatic movement in one of these schools.

I well remember that in those early years, 1948 to 1952, I was more than a little apprehensive about what was happening. It was clear that in movement and art, our standards were soaring. But what about the three R's? I was still uncertain, but I was certain enough to appoint a headmistress, distinguished in teaching children from ages 3 to 7, to headmistress of junior school children of ages 7 to 11. The move was a success. The school achieved a national reputation, and its staff became a nursery for gifted heads of schools, many of whom are still teaching with distinction.

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thusiasm of teachers and the excellence of their personal relationships. One assistant teacher in Mr. Jones' school has written in these terms:

"Many of the things which were novel then are now commonplace, and it is not easy to say why the work which was done was so vital. One thing is certain: a great deal of the vitality sprang from the excellent personal relationships which existed in the school, teacher to teacher and teacher to child. The teachers felt excited about the revolution which was taking place, and this excitement was transmitted to the children. The teachers were eager to visit each others' classrooms to discuss the newest piece of work. The staffroom was always littered with work, and much useful discussion and inspiration came from looking over the work at break time.

"I have never since experienced quite the same atmosphere as existed at Thurnscoe The Hill at that time. The credit, of course, must go to Mr. Jones who fostered our enthusiasm and from his own rich personality was able to enrich the vital growth that was taking place."

By the mid-1950's, we knew, from what was happening in a few of our schools, of the effect of good, personal, expressive work on the behavior and discipline of pupils.

From Mr. Jones' school came, for instance, this comment:

"We have seen that Art can give release to some children, Drama to others, Movement to others, and I feel sure that Music could accomplish it for some. It would appear that many of our academically brighter children have always obtained it through their English and arithmetic.

"Whatever it is that happens has a profound effect upon the child. Your apathetic child becomes a more normal and happy child who will talk to adults. Where they can be natural and move about as whole persons—not as a number on a school register—they are very different. The naughty child, the socially backward child, usually the result of continued repression of his vital energy, finds that he has a contribution to make and so takes his place in the school community.

"Complaints from residents in Thurnscoe East and visits from the Police or Probation Officer are now almost unknown. Cases reported by the Police have dropped from six or more per year to three in three years. (Proceedings taken in one case only—at the wish of the parent.)"

There is no gainsaying police statistics, and statistics similar to the preceding are now available from many schools. In recent years, convictions have soared among the teenagers deprived of these methods, bu they are actually beginning to declin among 10-year-olds.

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And so we printed the anthology of work from some 16 schools, and the teachers who produced the work told how they produced it. We stressed the point that children whose personal writing is sensitive are likely to record well; we included a chapter on the changes that were taking place in the writing of English; we included a page or two of teachers' views on spelling; and we did our best to expose the harmful folly of most ways of "testing" English writing. This anthology was published by the Authority and issued privately to schools. A publishing firm very soon sought and was granted leavè to publish the book, which has now gone through five impressions.

Clearly, we had made advances in physical education and drama, in art and in writing.

Mathematics followed, and by the late 1960's, we had every reason to believe that children understood far more of what they were doing than we did when we learned our arithmetical tricks.

The right educational use of speech, perhaps the greatest step forward of all, alone eludes us. I have seen it developed in one school only, and I never cease to wonder at the effect it had on even the slowest of child learners in that one group.

We shall know in the next five to ten years whether the successes gained in our primary schools are to invade the secondary stage. Certainly, a start has already been made.

HOW DOES THE NEWS OF CHANGE SPREAD?

So-called change can be brought about by imposing it on schools, just as so-called education has in the past been brought about by imposing it on children. In either case, the effect in many instances is a lack of conviction, a lack of sincerity, and inert and sterile results.

At worst, a group of pundits remote from the classroom think great thoughts as to how improvements shall be brought about, and these are then accepted by the school authority and "required" by them from the schools. Even if this does not occur quite so blatantly, there are always promotion-seeking teachers who are prepared to mount the current bandwagon and do what the pundits or the paying authority say should be done. Where the punditry is less blatant, groups of teachers are brought together in authoritative conclave, and they decide what shall be done by their fellows. Again, the doing of it becomes an official requirement.

Both of these procedures court ultimate failure. Either of them, however, and particularly the second, may achieve a measure of success. But real progress in education is best brought about when it is drawn convincingly and sincerely from good practicing teachers. One of the great joys of administering education in an area the size of the West Riding of Yorkshire, with its 12,000 teachers, is that any day its senior officers can see teaching genius at work. Indeed it is one of the major aspects of their job to see that good ideas spread. How is this best done?

In 1952, the Authority purchased, cheaply, an eighteenth century mansion, Woolley Hall, which was sadly falling into disrepair. The Authority then restored it, furnished it in a civilized and attractive manner, and appointed a warden, a deputy warden, a domestic and gardening staff, and made it capable of taking into residence 45 to 50 teachers plus half a dozen visiting staff.

Initially, "punditry," as I have called it, was well to the fore in the minds of those who prepared the weekend and mid-week courses the Hall was providing. Experts told the teachers what to do.

Soon, however, those who ran the courses realized that what they were doing with the teachers was the opposite of what they were recommending the teachers do with their pupils. Very rapidly the ways of handling the courses changed. Formal lectures were reduced; discussion groups and seminars were increased. As often as possible, teachers were put in learning situations where they were conscious of an inadequacy similar to what their pupils so often felt. They painted and modeled and explored the

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The demand for the use of Woolley Hall by advisory staff wishing to raise standards and spread good practice was very heavy. More and more, however, they came to realize that the best way to raise standards and spread good practice was to get good, practicing teachers to say what they did with children and what happened to the children with whom they did it.

I remember once listening to a slow-speaking, not very articulate, not very spectacular headmaster who spoke quietly and with the utmost sincerity of the work he was doing in his school. He showed some children's work and talked with the utmost conviction of the children who had produced it. It was very moving, and as we went out of the room after the talk, I heard one rather brash and inadequate teacher say to another, "Well, what's good enough for Old Hanson is good enough for me." I felt we had made one small step forward.

It is important that such a center, which can be—and in the case of Woolley Hall was and is—the powerhouse of the area, should receive the direct concern and attention of the head of the service. Believing this as I

do, I am always present when the program of courses for the year is compiled. In the early years, I was present when the warden and the director of the course discussed what they were going to do. Some of the questions I invariably asked were: What does the course aim at achieving? How do you propose to achieve it? What staff do you propose to employ? What talks will they undertake?

I learned early on that it is fatal, for example, to place before a group of indifferent teachers an exponent of outstanding brilliance. Some will hate him, many reject him, and about all will disbelieve him. These are the only reactions available to them if they are to retain their self-respect in the presence of this luminary. The right practice is to place before any group someone who is just far enough ahead of them that they have every hope of catching up with him.

It is of paramount importance, of course, that the teachers themselves should have a major say in many of the courses. In the case of Woolley Hall, every year we have called in a number of teachers associations and put at their disposal not only Woolley Hall itself but any of the advisory staff of the Authority whose help they want.

A course, however, is not enough. It has to be followed up. A teacher who has paid for his weekend at Woolley and learned much from it may be hesitant about taking the first step in his own school. He needs encouragement, and this comes best from visiting advisers who know about the course and the kind of inspiration, understanding, and advice that it proclaimed.

What should be the approach of such an adviser? The most gifted exponent that I

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What should be the approach of such an adviser? The most gifted exponent that I know of the art of drawing the best out of the schools that he visited was an adviser who, when he entered a school, however poor in quality it might be, would look around until he could find something he could commend and that might, if developed, prove productive. He would praise the teacher for it, invite the head to see it, and leave the school with the idea that the school would be a better place if there was more of it. At his next visit, there *would* be more of it, and the teacher who had produced it would have begun to think why it was good, and his insight and understanding would deepen.

As the teacher developed, he might be invited to address a group at a teachers' center. The result would be apprehension, support and encouragement, much thought, and a growing confidence which would eventually affect the whole school. It is in this way that schools wax and flourish and give birth to new and effective ways. It is a slow process; but it is sure, sincere, and founded with a firmness that seldom results from an attempt to improve from above by new blanket techniques.

There is a world of differences between new ways born of conviction and new ways introduced by those who mistake the shadow for the substance and who, having jumped upon the bandwagon, find that they cannot play the instruments.

THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF CHANGE

I would like now to state what I believe to be the right conditions for successful change and then to list the signs of a poor school in which change is needed—or in which it has been attempted but has not been understood.

The first requirement for change is that one or two people must work as "encouragers" and advisers. They should be people who have proved to themselves, by their own work in schools, the benefits of change. They must be sensitive, patient, undoctrinaire, and unauthoritarian people who will avoid all temptation to impose rapid change on schools; rather, they will look for growing points in each school and move on from there.

These people must accept the fact that to enlighten and develop the dull mind is the real test of a teacher, and that the purpose of education is to get the best out of all children and not merely to provide a rich diet for the gifted few.

They must be persons whom teachers will enjoy having in their schools. The advisers themselves must have sufficient humility to recognize that many of the teachers with whom they work will be far more gifted as teachers than they have been.

They must be able to recognize high standards of achievement and to discern what has inspired them. They must understand the subtleties of obtaining such standards by awakening in children a desire to produce their best and to take a justifiable pride in it, rather than by imposing arbitrary standards on children.

They must have a center in which to do inservice training, a center to which teachers will enjoy coming and where they are made welcome. Such a center should serve as an education powerhouse throughout the area in which it is situated. It should be a place that is well equipped with teaching resources that are available for inspection by teachers who attend the courses. But those who direct the center must be fully aware that right personal relationships and right attitudes will do more for education than all the gadgets, kits, tests, workbooks, imposed discipline, and rules in the world.

The program of such a center will consist of a certain amount of "chalk and talk" by acknowledged experts whose main function is to stimulate discussion. More time, however, will be devoted to interchanges among teachers; the center will be a place where teachers explain to each other what they do, describe how the work they display was produced, and tell what happened to the children as a result of producing it. In

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The center will be the base for learning that will affect teaching. Here, teachers will paint and model and write and make music

and explore the environment at their own level. In doing so, they will grow in their understanding of children's problems.

In the preceding paragraphs I have identified some of the conditions for successful change. Let us now consider the signs in a school that betray *the need for change.* There are many such signs, of course; here are some of them:

- the acceptance of low standards
- work poorly displayed and labeled
- only the best work displayed
- litter, untidiness, noise
- torn and tattered books
- too much reliance on competition
- children of varying abilities, backgrounds, and maturity all being taught the same thing at the same time
- fear of bare walls
- walls covered with tawdry commercial illustrations
- walls covered with a display of children's work which has not been changed for months
- shabby display tables
- jam jars for flowers
- sentimentality
- meaningless projects
- jargon without thought
- workbooks that demand little of the teacher and are mere filling of blanks or underlining by the child

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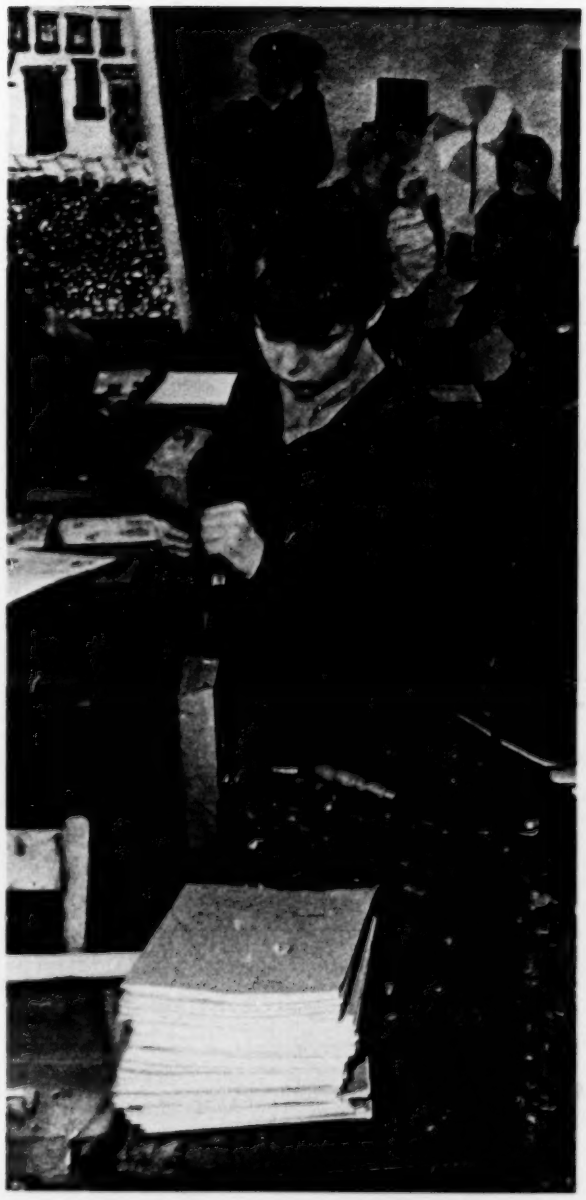

- following the fashion
- indiscriminate use of handwork and gadgetry
- failure to build on the strengths of the staff
- attempts to measure aspects of learning not susceptible to measurement
- change for the sake of change
- failure to recognize that change must come gradually
- change that lacks both understanding and conviction.

The preceding list suggests some of the signs in a school that indicate the need for change; there are other evidences of failure that are far more difficult to eradicate or to avoid. One of these is the influence of social pressures. At any time and in almost any country, schools are subjected to sometimes fierce social pressures. In England, the 11 plus examination afflicted the primary schools and inhibited development. It is no coincidence that development has taken place as the 11 plus pressures have been removed. At the secondary stage, however, the public external examinations at 16 and 18 plus still dominate what is taught to the quick learner and corrupt what is taught to the slow.

In the United States, I had the feeling that pressures from the universities, social pressures exerted by parents and alumni,

pressures exerted by the graded system itself, and pressures of competition, all tended to make teachers teach relentlessly as they themselves had been taught. Moreover, it seemed that the administration often dared do no other than support these pressures, all of which stem from a status-controlled structure of society as hierarchical in its way as anything we find in England.

Such pressures are fierce. Interestingly enough, their impact varies from one segment of society to another. In England at the present time, we have the seemingly odd situation that change in the schools is most likely to succeed in areas where parents are really intelligent and knowledgeable about education and seek change when it is necessary, and in areas where parents don't know enough or care enough to ask questions about change. It is in the middle areas of suburban social aspiration that change is resisted and that schools are pressured to groom and train traditionally for the great rat race of life.

Let me conclude this section with the response a teacher made to a question that I raised. The teacher was working in an informal school, and my question was: "How do you maintain standards when so much of the decision making is left to the children who work nowadays so much more on their own and at their own pace?"

He replied thus:

"It seems to us that high standards of academic achievement were obtained of old for just the same reason they are obtained today—somebody was determined on getting them. Yesterday, it was a matter of command; today, it is much more a matter of influence. But there would not be high quality results in either situation unless objectives had been clearly defined."

We must be careful, I think, in our efforts to assess the achievements of today and those of yesterday. Sometimes I wonder if we may not be comparing today's worst with yesterday's best. If, however, the level of achievement drops because of the new ways of learning, I must suggest that, for one thing, the teachers have lowered their expectations. They have failed to convince the children of the necessity for choosing that which is right and pursuing it with discipline. Here, of course, the teacher's example gives us the important clue. To my mind, education is something to do with learning *together,* and if the adult leader does not lead, or opts out of giving guidance, or leaves the children to initiate, choose, and decide without his constructive influence, then morale will decline and there will be an awful lot of underachievement. The teacher's job, among other

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We must not forget the headmaster's influence either. His job is to inspire the staff with what is possible, and he must help make sure that goals are very clear.

A lot of woolly thinking and jargon have been associated with modern methods of education and have done damage. One of the culprits, I believe, has been the notion that you must "let the child follow his own interest." This worthy and excellent idea often ends with a full stop, and the whole point is then lost. The injunction should continue ". . . and work together with the teacher toward a clearly understood objective."

About two years ago, I had the beneficial experience of looking into some half a dozen or so "progressive" schools in the South of England. In the interests of freedom, the children were often to be seen going about quite happily, and there was certainly a friendliness and easy social grace between staff and children. But nowhere did I see much evidence of disciplined planning toward worthwhile objectives, and that, in my thinking, is essential if learning and growth are to take place.

WHAT HAVE WE GAINED FROM THE REVOLUTION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

When we seek to answer this question, we must keep clearly in mind just what we want. If what we want is the learning of the basic skills and the ability to acquire information from books, we have gained something—but not all that much. If we broaden our goals, however, to include freedom to learn by exploring, choosing, and making judgments; an eager interest in nature and in human society; the ability to express personal ideas and feelings fluently, forcefully, and, as occasion demands, imaginatively; the development of self-respect and of compassionate regard for others; and the capacity to enjoy those great aspects of civilization designed to be enjoyed—such as music, art, and literature—then there is no doubt at all that the newer ways are vastly superior to those that preceded them.

Perhaps the first and most important gain derives from the fact that because the child learns from his own explorations, he's *eager* in his learning. Artificial goals, such as the competitive lists, merit marks, and examination results, then tend to be redundant. Once this situation comes about, the well-endowed child is no longer exalted beyond his desserts; the endeavors of the least able are more easily cherished; the self-aggrandizement of the quick in the presence
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dizement of the quick in the presence of the slow and the envy of the slow for the quick are both reduced. Each child makes his mark and receives "that recognition which our natures crave and acknowledge with renewed endeavor." This is a quotation from a statement made a hundred years ago by a school inspector who knew then what we must continue to keep in mind: We all crave recognition; it is the spur to nearly all our endeavors.

In the "new" schools, the individual can't be lost in the mass. The talking and listening that go on in the early years are part of the love that is the start of life for all pupils. Painting, drawing, acting, modeling, singing, and dancing offer to our children the beginnings of an enjoyment of beauty that later enriches adult life. The opportunity pupils have to learn from natural phenomena gives them their first acquaintance with scientific truth. Thus it is that love and beauty and truth are changing our schools, and we are moving away from the obedience that is so important in the Old Testament law to the truths of the New Testament which affirm "that knowledge puffeth up, that charity edifyeth, and that love is the fulfilling of the law."

One of the interesting aspects of the changes that are taking place in my own county, the West Riding, is that they are completely spontaneous, as far as I can determine. I know the schools in which the changes began and I know something about how the ideas spread—and what has happened had nothing at all to do with "educational philosophy." I don't believe that the people who started the changes had ever heard of Caldwell Cook or Dewey. They owed nothing to the progressive school movement of the 1920's and 1930's. What is most interesting, however, is that the good educational theorists and philosophers of the past would have given full support to the people who are making today's changes.

Support would have come also from many other people, because the newer ways lean heavily toward the aesthetic and moral convictions of many thoughtful and sensitive and compassionate persons. The new ways, for example, agree with Plutarch that the soul is not a vase to be filled but rather a hearth that is to be made to glow. They agree with Erasmus and his love of the liberal arts; with Rabelais in taking Gargantua through the meadows and over grassy places to observe all that grows; with Montaigne in urging that the child observe the curious in his surroundings; with Locke in his opinion that learning must be had but as subservient only to the greater qualities; with Rousseau in his avoidance of verbal lessons; with Goethe who said that to digest knowledge, one must have swallowed

with a good appetite; with Ruskin who held that the spirit needs several sorts of food, of which knowledge is only one; with Whitehead in his condemnation of inert ideas and his conviction that every child should experience the joy of discovery; with John Dewey in much that he said in *Experience and Education;* and certainly with a great deal that is set out in *The Humanities in the Schools,* a little book published in the United States in 1968.

To be a bit more specific about our gains, I would say that children certainly express themselves in painting and writing and dramatic movement as they never did in the days of formal instruction. In mathematics, they may not manage the grotesque calculations of our grandfathers, but their understanding of the whys and wherefores of mathematics is far greater than it used to be. In one of the schools that I know best, the quality of teaching is completely upsetting the national norms. The really significant gain, however, is the dramatic change in children's behavior, and how this has come about is something that I cannot readily explain.

One thing I know is that the changes in our primary schools are affecting the human spirit just as much as they are affecting the human mind, despite the endless succession of pressures that conspire to focus our attention on what can be measured to the neglect of what cannot. Perhaps I had better explain what I mean by "spirit," an archaic word that has dropped out of fashion in this age of measurement. My spirit deals with my loves and my hates and my hopes and my fears and my ambitions and my enthusiasms and my enjoyment of what is beautiful. My mind tells me that six times seven is forty-two; my spirit responds to the kindness of my friends. As I see it, when the human spirit is wrong, it makes for evil and cruelty and strife and warfare. When it is right, it makes for generosity and compassion and nobility.

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The education of the mind is relatively easy. We bring it about by the processes of mathematics and science, by manipulating the facts of history and geography, and by all our school programs where measurement is so important. We bring in effective gadgetry to make these programs more efficient, we build splendid buildings, and we write textbooks. Education officers and superintendents of schools evolve new systems of organization. And 90 percent of all this business is aimed at the mind. We overvalue the mind and extol its products—from the two times table to the technicalities of

the space program. We let these things take on more importance than the actual growth and development of the child himself.

And since the things of the spirit are impalpable and cannot be measured, they are difficult to deal with and are conveniently put aside. As we all know, the result is that the growth of knowledge and mental acuity has far outstripped the growth of humanity and compassion and other manifestations of the qualities of the spirit.

The kind of teaching and learning that is developing in our best elementary schools does not exalt mind over spirit; it starts and ends with the individual. From the outset, the child is thrown on his own resources. Once this happens, initiative and sensitivity and determination and many other qualities emerge as by-products of the learning process. The child learns to recognize and value his power of expression, and this power of expression is central to the new forms of learning. Sensitivity to beauty in a variety of forms is deliberately cultivated. And more and more, the teacher comes to realize that what really matters is not the quality of the picture that the child has drawn or the excellence of the writing he has produced but what has happened to the child during the process.

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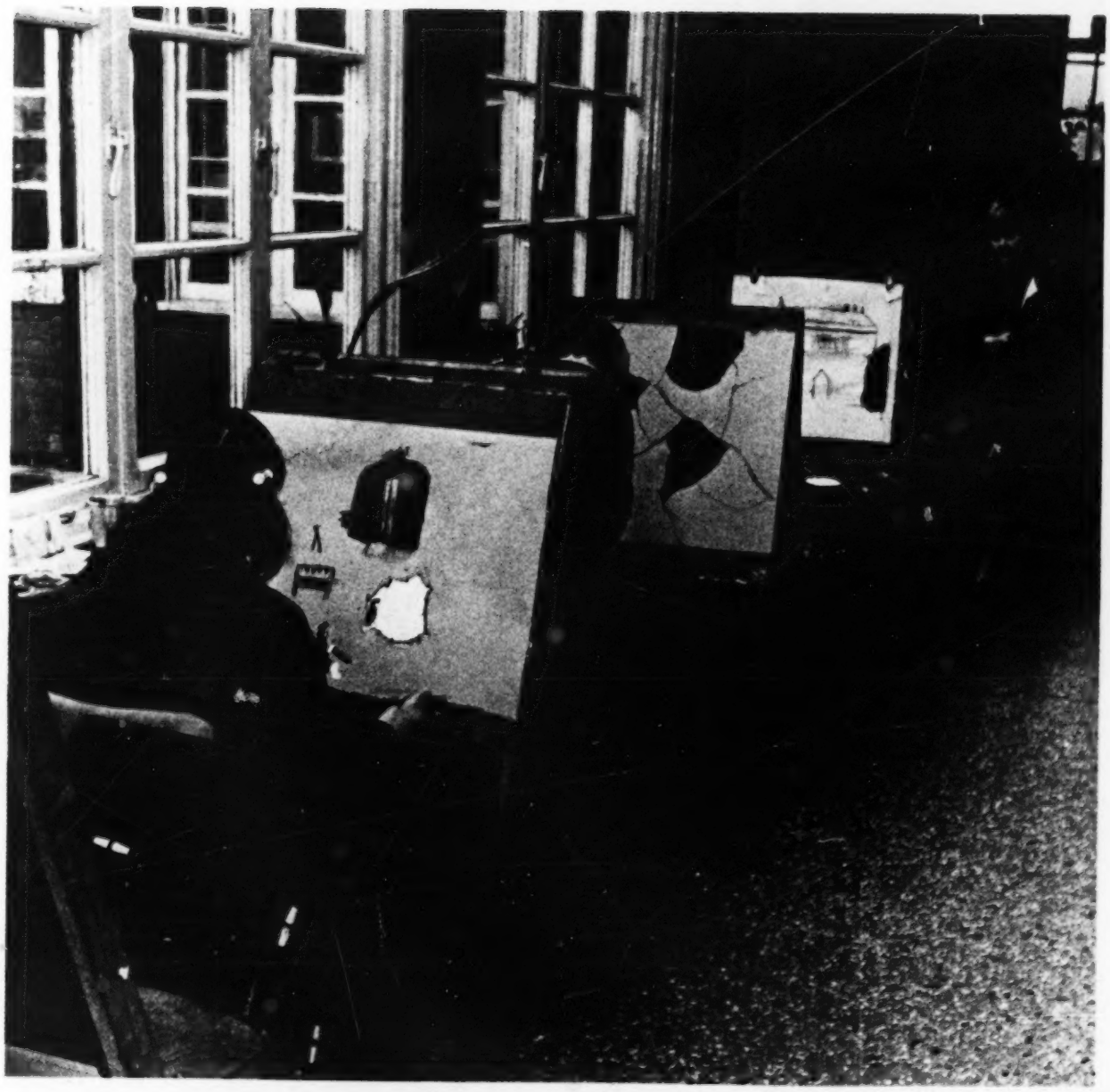

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He serves on the governing bodies of the Open University and two independent schools.

Sir Alec is the author of *The Excitement of Writing,* published by the National Council of Teachers of English, 1967, and *Children In Distress,* with Barbara Megsun, published by Penguin Books, 1968.